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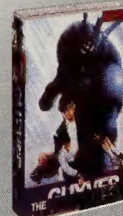
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Fatalists will tell you that all good things must come to an end, and I'll always respond with the same question: why?

The comic industry is full of pessimists predicting the worst; I would say it's something I've been guilty of in the past as much as anyone. Looking back over the last couple of years worth of CW (desperately trying to think of something to write here, if you have to have a reason) I saw something that was worrying. It's more noticeable in the introductions I've done for the *Comic Book Price Guide* every year for the last six: I'm turning into a fatalist. I'm on the cycle of worrying about being a pessimist, which makes me more pessimistic, which makes me more worried...and eventually you just reach a point where you need to cry 'Stop the World. I want to get off!'

The comic industry is levelling out, falling into its natural place in the scheme of things. Generally that seems to be lower than a lot of people would like. The halcyon days of the *Wall Street Journal* rating comics as a better investment than diamonds have been and gone; the record-breaking years have passed, and the media and speculators have given comics the cold-shoulder. All good things must come to an end. But were speculation and hype good things? For every dealer lining his pocket with silver during the boom there's now a cloud kicked up from the rubble of collapsing businesses. It's bad.

But for all the talk of comics doing the industry equivalent of a black hole and disappearing up itself, comics are still bigger business than they've been since the direct market opened for business in the seventies. The collapsing companies are, in the main, speculator-driven trading card outlets who expanded during the boom to take in comics as they would any high-profile domestic consumable that appeared. If there was a run on fridges, they'd probably have a window-full.

In the UK there has been a dark cloud over the industry for years; we've watched the thunderhead roll over the horizon and waited for the storm to break, down there in the trough of the depression, when the sticky closeness of something-bad-about-to-happen knots your stomach and glues your shirt to your armpits.

Well, I'm here to tell you that the storm has broken and we hid ourselves away in despair so successfully that we haven't noticed the rain. It's happening now, starting with a downfall of speculation based buying; it'll be followed by an outbreak of speculator-driven companies collapsing - those that threaten through ads that they'll only print 25,000 or whatever. They're tumbling down, taking their often dire product with them. Nobody should mourn. They're the most cynical of companies and they'll survive, waiting like barrow boys for the next product to peak.

And after the downpour, when the streets have been washed clean, it'll be time to come back out into the open, enjoy the fresh air and hope that the industry doesn't get fouled up again with fool's gold. We'll be on the upswing, and this time there's the whole film industry behind us: *Batman III*, *Spider-Man*, *Judge Dredd*...pray they do their jobs well and we'll all benefit. Know they're doing their job and you'll lose that air of fatalism. Think positive - it is getting better.

PS Some good things do come to end. Good luck, Corinne. You have our humble thanks for the past and best wishes for the future.

Contributors: Paul H. Birch, David Bishop, Steve Cook, Neil Cooper, Warren Ellis, Richard Hill, Dave McLoughlin, Peter Taylor, Dave Weir.

Cover: Dave Gibbons becomes the first artist to achieve the dizzy heights of a second CW cover with a stunning rendition of Martha Washington, who also makes her second appearance. Our cover was especially coloured by Angus McKie whose computer has enhanced the Martha Washington Goes to War series written by Frank Miller. (c) Frank Miller/Dave Gibbons. Used by permission. And much appreciated it is too.

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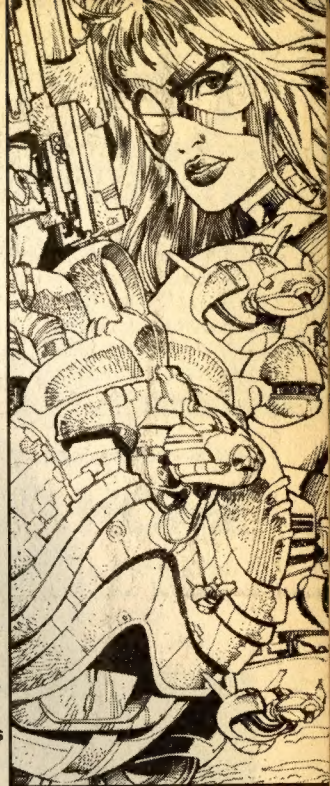
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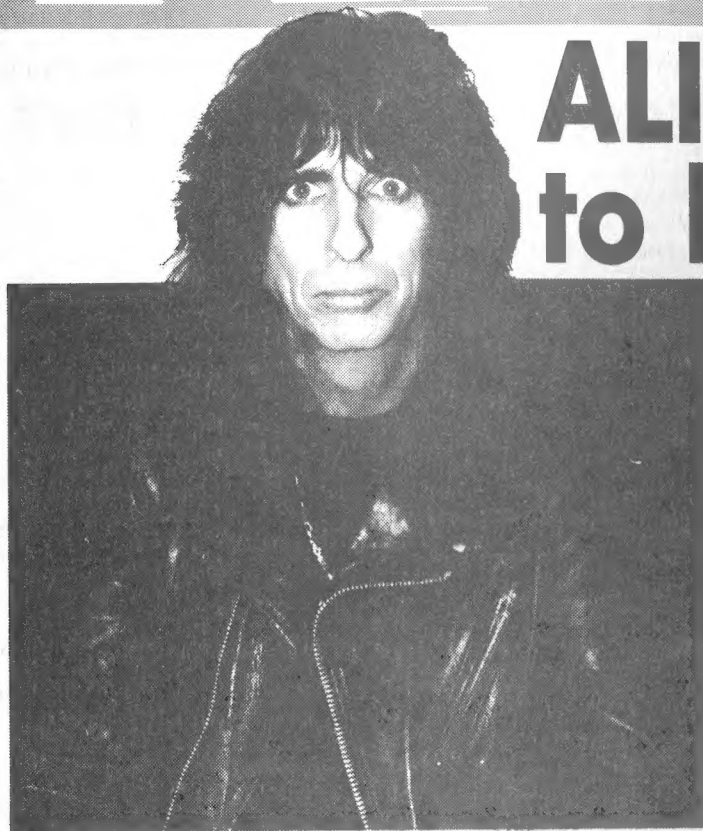
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NEWS

ALICE Tempted to London



Forbidden Planet were the hosts to one of the most exclusive comic signings of the year on the 21st of May; Alice Cooper, rock god and comic character, and Neil Gaiman, comic writer extraordinaire, were there to promote *The Last Temptation of Alice* and the launch of the Titan Books imprint of *Death: The High Cost of Living*. *The Last Temptation* is the first in a new line of music based comics to be released by Marvel later this year.

Unfortunately, Alice's busy schedule meant that he was unable to give more than one interview; the signing was squeezed in between filming for *The Big Breakfast* and *Top of the Pops*. *Time Out* magazine managed to edge themselves into the

morning, cutting into the signing time and preventing anyone from asking any questions - cheers *Time Out*!

Neil on the other hand was happy to explain how he became involved in the project:

"It all began long before the comic happened," he told me. "The comic was an odd sort of synergistic by-product towards the end, the point where it started was with the album. Alice wanted to make an album with a story - to write the album around it. His A & R man was a huge fan of my work and sent Alice of pile; Alice loved it and got in touch with me and I flew out to Phoenix to do an interview with him, just to talk and find out if we had anything in common, if I wanted to work with him - and I liked Alice a lot. So that was how it began."

From this beginning, Neil wrote a story, Alice went and wrote the songs from that, and the two got together to put some polish up the results. At

CHAOS CITY COMICS TO RELEASE MARTHA WASHINGTON SPECIAL EDITION

Chaos City Comics has obtained the rights to produce two exclusive editions of the new Legend title, *Martha Washington Goes to War* by Frank Miller & Dave Gibbons. The two editions are: * a 'sky blue' edition limited to 500 copies signed by Gibbons, each certificated and numbered, priced £7.95. * a 'sunset red' edition limited to only 100 copies signed by Gibbons with 50% of the run also signed by Miller, priced £14.95. Any order of 2 copies will guarantee a Miller signed copy.

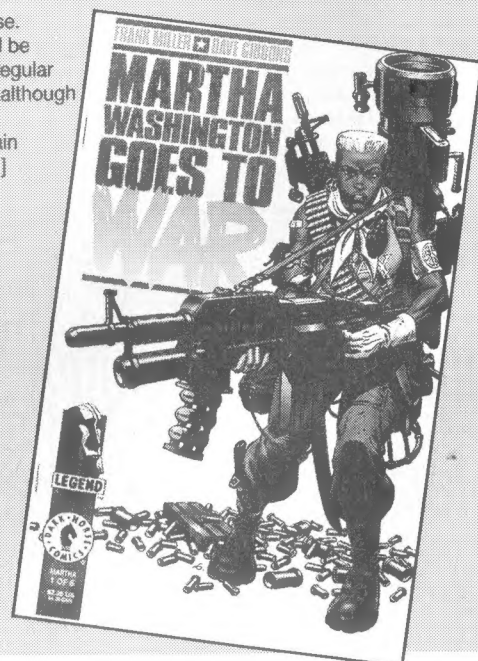
Each edition will include a coupon to be entered into a prize draw to win an ultra-exclusive 'white' edition of which only 10 will be printed. Retailers will be offered this edition for orders of £500 or over on the red and blue editions. If you can't live without one, why not enter our exclusive

competition this very issue, and take a look at some of the story in our interview with Angus McKie.

Both editions will feature an all new glossy wraparound cover, the ordering deadline being June 30, and the specials are expected to ship two weeks after the regular

edition from Dark Horse.

Dave Gibbons will be signing copies of the regular edition at Chaos City, although the date has yet to be decided; you can obtain further information on] 0727 838 719.





that point, Marvel was one of a group of publishers that approached Alice's management to propose licensing for their new line of rock comics. As there was plot left over from the album, it was a relatively simple matter for Neil to put together an outline. There was also a computer game in the offing, though that now seems to have been left by the wayside. Incidentally, Neil says that this is the only way that he would ever work for Marvel - with a product licensed to them so that essentially they are working for him.

The comic itself is great; if you remember Alice Cooper's previous comic by Marvel, you may be expecting a tacky story loosely based around Alice. Instead you will be getting a really cool story based around Alice as a malevolent showman. Where the first offering was comic in style, this is macabre and as Neil is the first to admit, "Bradbury-esque". Michael Zulli's artwork is great and complements Neil's writing style. Covers are by Dave McKean and are very reminiscent of *Sandman* covers. In fact the whole comic looks more like a Vertigo product than a Marvel one. Spooky!

Another element that sets this venture apart from other Marvel products is the "weird corporate synergy" between Marvel and Sony. What this has meant is that Marvel are committed to deadlines created by Sony for the release of the album. At the signing there was a special preview copy of the first issue,

complete in every detail, but without a price. Lucky owners of a signed copy of this will no doubt be laughing all the way to the bank one day. For fans who were unable to get to the signing however, there will be a limited edition version of the CD shipping with the comic at the end of June.

So what were the highlights of this collaboration for Neil?

"If you saw *Top of the Pops*, they did a blow up of a double page spread about 20 feet high as the backdrop behind Alice. It's the first time Michael Zulli's been on *Top of the Pops* - and one of my words! (To see what Neil's talking about, you'll have to turn to the pages just before the centre of the first issue).

The Last Temptation of Alice #1 will be shipping on 7 June and will come with a limited edition CD. The record will be released simultaneously by Epic (catalogue number 52771). *Death: The High Cost of Living* is currently on release from Titan Books and should be available in all good comic shops.



BLACKBALL COMICS NOT DEAD, JUST HIBERNATING FOR THE SUMMER

Reports of the demise of Blackball Comics have elicited an angry response from publisher Dave Elliott, who says that the company has not died, but, citing what he called 'tight' market conditions, has cancelled *Blackball*

Comics #2-4 which had been due to ship in April through June. *Trencher's Guide to Comics* has been cancelled and *Radical Dreamer* has also been put on hold. Blackball will resolicit the latter and plans to produce both the *John Pain Special* and *Blackball Comics Special* in August.

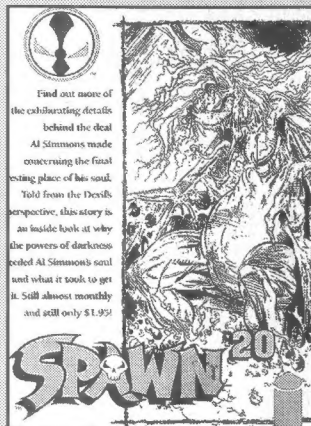
BONE FINDS NEW HOME

Jeff Smith has produced an 8-page *Bone* story for the August issue of *Disney Adventures*, and will mark *Bone*'s colour debut - it will be fully painted by Tom Luth. *Disney Adventures* have previously reprinted *Bone* #1 in full colour. The *Disney Adventures* episode will be the only time the strip will be seen in colour, although the story will be reprinted in a future *Bone* collection. Unfortunately, because of licensing restrictions, the issue will not be imported into the UK.

The second volume of *The Complete Bone Adventures* reprints issues #7-12 and includes the 'Great Cow Race' storyline. Priced \$12.95 for 144 pages, with new illustrations by Smith and an introduction by Neil Gaiman. Check out our interview with

Jeff Smith this issue, then note that *Bone* #15 reveals Phoney Bone's mysterious link with the Rat Creatures, Fone and Thom arrive back at the farm, and Phoney and Smiley wash dishes in the Barrelhaven Tavern.

McFARLANE CANCELS SPAWN



Two issues of Todd McFarlane's best-selling *Spawn* comic are to be cancelled and resolicited. According to McFarlane "Nineteen and twenty were already hopelessly late. They were going to have to either be resolicited or shipped on a returnable basis. So I came up with a logical, reasonable compromise. Kill 19 and 20 and ship a non-returnable *Spawn* #21 within the time window that it was solicited for. But my decision was a double-edged sword. From a creative standpoint it allowed me to create a kick-ass introductory story to a major story arc. Retailers can promote it as a cool and convenient jumping on point for new customers who may have become interested in *Spawn* as a result of the Batman team-up."

Tony Lobito, Image's Publisher, said that both cancelled issues were stand-alone stories which were both partly completed. They would both be solicited in the future.

BARBICAN DEBACLE

Friday the 13th was certainly a day to remember for the dealers who set up their stalls at the Barbican Exhibition Centre in anticipation of the three day HTC World Show, which was heralded by the organisers as 'for fans of comics, anime, manga, sci-fi, Red Dwarf, Gerry Anderson, fantasy, virtual reality and much more...'. With advertising promised on Capital Radio and an anticipated turnout of 20,000 visitors, the 8pm close of the first day couldn't come soon enough for some.

Many of the 'confirmed' guests were not there, and those that were found themselves poorly treated to the point of insult; when introduced, one artist was astonished to hear the organisers announce that he was setting up his own publishing company, as this was the first he knew of it! The few fans that attended could be found wandering around the badly signposted Barbican in a daze looking for the dealers room; talks and interviews were in unmarked siderooms and not announced; one of the co-organisers was 'no longer with the company' when sought out by one of our colleagues at *Comics International*, and the second organiser sought the assistance of security before he would answer the

complaints of a group of angry stand-holders. HTC World have since announced their bankruptcy and laid off staff.

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★★US★★ NEWSBRIEF

AARDVARK- VANAHEIM

If you missed out on the first printing of *Cerebus* #0, a second printing will ship in July. Don't forget that issue 0 won our best one-shot publication award this year, so if you haven't got into *Cerebus* yet, now's your chance.

ARIA PRESS

Colleen Doran's *A Distant Soil* goes monthly with #9, a 24-page b/w independent which received an ecstatic review from Howard Stangroom in our pages a couple of months ago. The back up strip 'D.W.I.' is by Jo Duffy, who was until recently writing *Catwoman*.

AXIS COMICS

Axis, founded a year ago by Larry Stoman & Todd Johnson, has collapsed. Stroman has said that *Tribe* #4-6 and *Shaman's Tears* #3-4 will ship as solicited, but all other titles - including *Dethgrip*, *Beasties*, *Quantum 5*, *Nightvenger*, *Power Company*, *Marcus Arena* and others - have been cancelled. With issue 7, *Tribe* will be published by another company, although who that will be has yet to be announced.

CALIBER PRESS

Negative Burn #13 is a 64-page anniversary special which kicks off with an episode of Alan Moore's *Songbook* illustrated by Neil Gaiman, plus Mr Mamoulia by Brian Bolland, Milk & Cheese by Evan Dorkin and plenty more.

DARK HORSE

Dark Horse have proclaimed July as Make A Break month, and are imploring retailers to change their buying habits to take in more than just superheroes. As alternatives they're offering nine issue #1s.

Legend add Paul Chadwick's *Concrete: Killer Smile* to their roster, a new 4-part series. It begins with *Concrete's* friend Larry Munro stopping to get some gas; he ends up with a gun at his head, driving a pyromaniac around LA. Another new *Concrete* tale appears in *Dark Horse Presents* #87, also released in July, as is *Concrete: Fragile Creature*, a 152-page trade paperback collecting the 4-issue series plus an essay from creator Chadwick.

Citing disappointing sales of *Danger Unlimited* ("the orders on the third issue were actually lower than that of *Next Men*") and a lack of enthusiasm for the title, John Byrne launches *Babe* as a one-shot. Not, he insists, a new take on She-Hulk, but a spin-off from the former title which is going into hibernation for the foreseeable future. *Babe* arrives in Los Angeles for a romp involving a sleazy Hollywood agent and plenty of laughs.

For the future, Byrne is already discussing a continuation of 2112 as a companion book for *Next Men* to appear as a regular series in late 1995 or early 1996.

The multiple-personalities of *Badger* return in two new series which both launch this month. In the two-part *Badger: Zen Pop Funny Animal Version* which also reintroduces Ham the Weather Wizard. The pair are



inmates in a modern day mental hospital, but could end up taking over the asylum in a tale written by Mike Baron with art by Steven Butler and Val Mayerick. Baron also pens *Badger: Shattered Mirror*, a 4-part with art by Jill Thompson which reveals another secret origin of *Badger* and his other selves.

A *Predator* invades the Hollywood of 1959, busy churning out sci-fi flicks for kids. How does 11-year-old Tommy Andersontake a real invasion when (with the aid of special glasses) he's the only one who can see the



invader? Find out in *Predator: Invaders From the Fourth Dimension*.

Ghost is a 48-page special by screenwriter Eric Luke (*Explorers*) and art team Matt Haley & Tom Simmons reviving the gun-toting spirit from last year's CGW series and setting up a new monthly series to be published for April next year (the artist lined up is no less than Adam Hughes). In this one-shot the Ghost faces a supervillain who can penetrate even her spectral defences.

Devil Chef is a one-shot, 32-page b/w humour title by Jack Pollock about hell's own chef.

Set in the Malay Jungle of 1932, *Rascals in Paradise* is a 3-parter by Jim Silke for fans of cheesecake and action, produced in an oversized (*Hardboiled*) format. Dorice 'Spicy' Saunders is a teenager with attitude teamed up with a pair of over-the-hill Soldiers of Fortune for adventures of passion, rockets and ray guns.

Solicited early, in case the film premiers early (some hope) is *The Mask: The Movie* a 2-part adaptation of the film with Mike Richardson Kilian Plunkett & B. Patterson sharing the credits. When it appears it'll be bi-weekly, *The Mask Returns* by John Arcudi & Doug Mahnke gets the trade paperback treatment at the same time.

Chris Moeller's *Shadow Empires: Faith Conquers* is a 4-part SF adventure in the tradition of Robert Heinlein set on a distant outpost of a far future empire where man is in decline. An alien invader is advancing and the only hope for humanity is the warrior-chief Faith and his elite troop, the Grey Rats.

More SF adventures come in the shape of a new Tom Veitch series, *Tales of the Jedi: The Feedon Nadd Uprising*, a two-parter telling the tale of a young Jedi and his battle to save the planet Onderon from the Dark Force. If that's not enough,

Veitch's previous series is gathered together as a 136-page trade paperback.

And if you don't want to Make A Break, Dark Horse are offering their own superhero comics in the shape of the *Will to Power* crossover of \$1.00 Comics' Greatest World titles. The second month's worth of titles covers chapters 5-8 of 12, and concludes next month.

DEFIANT



Most of July's titles are prequels to this month's crossover, *Schism*. The title refers to the gulf that separates the Dreamtime from our reality and the efforts of the Dark God Chasm, long-time enemy of Michael Alexander (from *Dark Dominion*), who wants to bridge the gap and become master of all reality. The story is told in two 48-page specials written by Jim Shooter and various Defiant creators, with Len Wein & David Lapham.

John Ridgway is the guest artist, on *Dark Dominion* #10.

FRACTAL COMICS

Ken Steacy, purveyor of fine art, countless covers, *Tempus Fugitive* and *Sacred & Profane*, has founded his own company to release the ongoing *Victor Vector & Yondo*, a new comic based on the CD-Rom adventure which pitches the characters into a time-spanning battle against the computer virus Ram Axis for possession of the Teleforce Ray, an artifact so dangerous it could spell salvation of termination for the future.

IMAGE

Boof is the latest character from Image, a little different from what you'd expect: Boof is a short, squat alien from the planet Smashmouth here to impose his will on Earth. Boof debuts in two titles, both written by Beau Smith, *Boof* (pencilled by John Cleary with inks by Tim Harkins) and *Boof and the Bruise Crew* (art by Tim Harkins). Created by Todd McFarlane, Boof was created for Anco Collector Supplies and will be available through their non-direct sales outlets to which they supply storage sleeves and the like.

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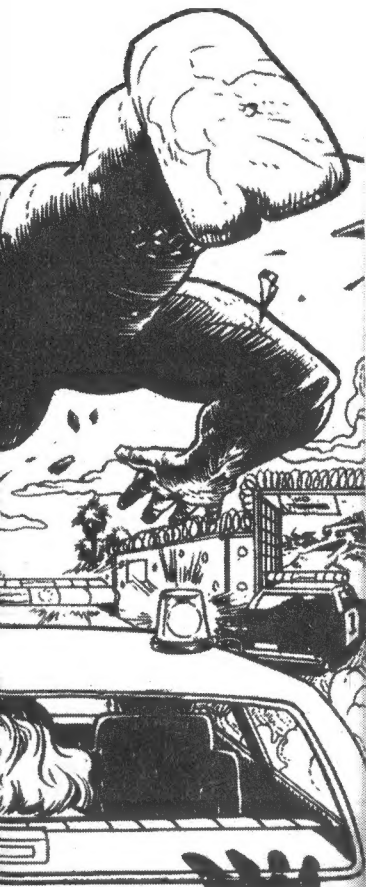


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-ORMISTON

★★US★★ NEWSBRIEF CONTINUED

Over a year after it was originally solicited, *Doom's IV* debuts in July as Grimm leads his team (Burn, Slyder and Brick) against the maniacal Doom Corp. Still advertised as optioned by Amblin Entertainment as a major motion picture, no word has come from the Spielberg camp as to whether it will ever appear on the big screen.

Hellshock is Jae Lee's solo venture for Image, a 4-issue descent into hell as a man makes the ultimate sacrifice to save a life, which heralds the coming of Hellshock - Daniel, the immaculately born son of an angel and a mortal woman.

Shadowhawk #12, shipping in August, begins a six-issue series which will include guest shots from Chapel, the WildC.A.T.s. (#13), 1963 (#14), The Others (#15), Supreme (#16) and Spawn (#17), published on a six week schedule with art by Walter McDaniel.

Before that, in July, the long-awaited (delayed two years) first issue of *WetWorks* finally hits the shelves again, created by Whilce Portacio although now in collaboration with Brandon Choi and Scott Williams. It will be released by Jim Lee's Wildstorm Productions, Lee already planning to incorporate *WetWorks* into Wildstorm's ongoing continuity by featuring team-member Dane in *Team 7*, planned for later this year.

KING HELL

Rick Veitch returns to the present after his stay in 1963 with *Rare Bit Fiends*, a dream diary which fans may recall from the pages of *MaxiMortal*. Apart from Rick's own dreams (about Alan Moore, Dave Sim, and a lot of other weird stuff) there's also guest dreams from Neil Gaiman, Steve Bissette, and others.

MALIBU



July's Bravura launch is *Edge*, a new 4-part series by Steven Grant & Gil Kane: Dr. James Carnell's dreams of

a perfect world where every human could develop his own powers and talents begins to take shape. Of course, not all the newly talented Ultimates share Carnell's vision or peaceful motives and soon he lies dead, and his son, Eric, missing. His youngest son Jack - also known as The Edge - is also dead, but comes back to life.

Malibu's regular line includes first issues for *Bruce Lee*, a six-part series of fictional adventures for the martial arts king, and *Mortal Kombat*, an ongoing series based on the game of the same name.

The Ultraverse launches two new spin-off titles, *Giant-Sized Freex* #1 and *Giant-Sized Mantra* #1. *Freex* continues the story from *Prime* #13

and launches a new direction for the team, told here in two stories running a total of 40 pages. *Mantra* introduces Topaz in an 8-page back-up who will be featuring in next month's *UltraForce*.

Malibu's Bravura programme will launch its second wave in August beginning with a special edition *Bravura Preview Book - 1995* which will introduce new Bravura titles like *The Nocturnals*, *Edge*, *Metaphysique*, *Strikeback* and others, featuring the artwork of Howard Chaykin, Dan Jurgens, Shawn McManus and others.

SLAVE LABOR

Slave Labor publish the one-shot *Frontier* by Paul Duncan & Steve Pugh

in July, best described as *Gunsmoke* meets *Judge Dredd*. The settlers on a frontier planet discover that claiming land on an alien world can lead to trouble.

TOPPS COMIC

As well as resoliciting adaptation of *Harry Harrison's Bill the Galactic Hero*, now a one-shot 48-page prestige format special rather than a 3-issue series, Topps also have the first issue of *Raptors Hijack*, the latest *Jurassic Park* spin-off by Steve Englehart, Neil Vokes & Paul Fricke, continuing the adventures of Dr. Grant as he seeks out a mating pair of Raptors in the Brazilian rain forests.

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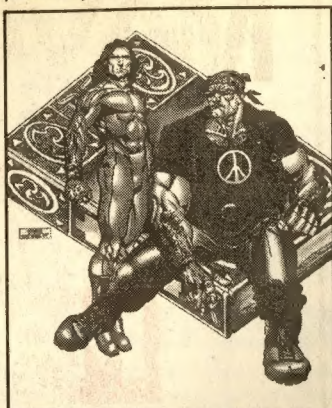
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★★US★★ NEWSBRIEF CONTINUED

VALIANT

Geomancer #1 is the first new post-Chaos Effect title for Valiant, written by Maurice Fontenot with art by Rags Morales, the story continuing directly from *Eternal Warrior #27*. John Ostrander joins the latter as regular writer, his first task to deal with Gilad's grief following the death of Geoff during last month's crossover. In the new title the Earth must choose a new geomancer and the Eternal

Warrior meets the wholly unlikely choice, a very different choice to any previously made. The first issue



comes in a wraparound chromium cover.

The *Magnus Robot Fighter Yearbook* takes place between the original Magnus issues 1 and 2 and tells the tale of why Magnus was sanctioned to fight the threat of dangerous robots. Written by Mike Baron, art is by Paul Smith whose previous work includes *The Golden Age* from DC.

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

Following last month's look at Rumiko Takahashi there's an opportunity to pick up some of her best work in the shape of the *Lum*Ursei Yatsura Collection* which reprints the first two

Viz volumes in one 400-page edition. Takahashi's other famous series, the third book of *Maison Ikkoku* begins publication in 6 issues as *Mermaid's Scar* comes to a close with issue 4. This month's *Animerica* is a *Ranma 1/2* special looking at the 161-episode TV series and the two theatrical releases that have had rave reviews in Japan.



★★UK★★ NEWSBRIEF

BLUE-EYED DOG

The house that published *Purr Quarterly* have announced #2 a cover by Jamie Hewlett, an interview with Russ Meyer, the H.R. Giger sketchbook, a history of Hammer Studios and Ted McKeever's *Metropolis*.

BOXTREE

Due in July are *Akira Book 1* a 128-page collection in colour based on the Epic Comics cut of Katsuhiro Otomo's cyberpunk classic, priced £6.99. Also available are *Deep Space Nine: Emancipation II* by Mike Barr, Gordon Purcell & Terry Pallot, priced £7.99, and *Classic Star Wars* reprinting the newly coloured and resized Dark Horse Comics version of Archie Goodwin & Al Williamson's newspaper strip, priced £6.99.

CM COMICS

Chris Morgan has *Brit Force Vol 2 #3* for July publication, with art by Russ Leach with whom Morgan has revamped the title.

DANCING ELEPHANT

Paul Grist has published the third issue of *Kane* which is available direct from the publisher (207 Marlcliffe Road, Sheffield S6 4AH) for £1.80 incl. p&p. This issue sees the strip rise from 24 to 32 pages. Cheques payable to Paul Grist, whose 5-part Grendel tale, *Grendel: Devil in the Midst*, has recently launched from Dark Horse.

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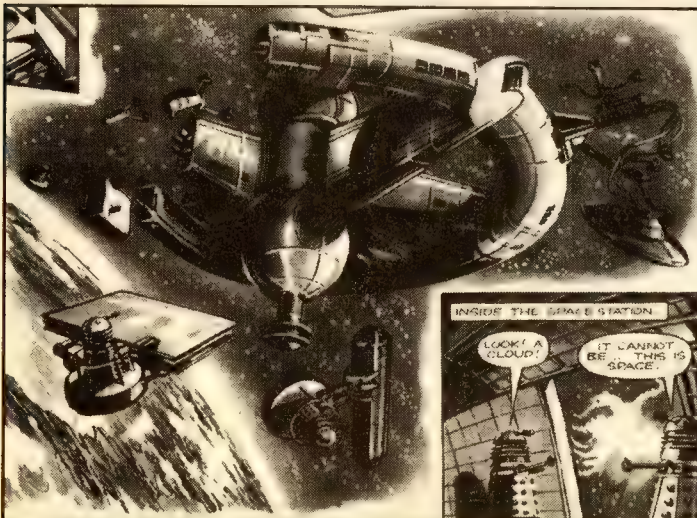
★★UK★★ NEWSBRIEF CONTINUED

MARVEL



Marvel's *Doctor Who Summer Special* is the first of a series of Who related items released by Marvel this year. The special, released in July, is a flip book with the theme of first and last, one side concentrating on William Hartnell, the other on Sylvester McCoy, with Archive features on the first and last episodes and a strip split into two 4-page parts. The *Doctor Who Yearbook* is also released at the end of July with the usual stories, features (one each by Nicholas Courtney and Sophie Allred), and two strips, one by John Ridgway, the other by Charlie Adlard.

August 4 will see the release of a 108-page *Dalek Chronicles* special reprinting the whole of the *TV Century 21* series with a new wraparound cover by Ron Turner, while *Age of Chaos*, previously announced as a 4-part series, will be released as a one-shot 92-page black & white special, the first 22 pages drawn by John Burns, the rest by Barrie Mitchell, with a cover by Alan Davis. A *Blake's 7* special is lined up for the end of the year.



MINDBENDERS

Dragon Rider is a new title due to launch in July by one-time 2000AD writer Hilary Robinson & long-time Fleetway artist Sandy James (probably best known on Johnny Cougar in *Tiger*). Prince Mirtren struggles to keep face as a *Dragon Rider* of High Marne, but his father has other plans: he wants to marry off his son to a neighbouring country to keep the peace.

Freddie's Last Dance #5 is the final issue.

RINGPULL

Ringpull Press Ltd., whose SF novel, *Vurt* by Jeff Noon, won the Arthur C. Clarke Award in April, have secured worldwide representation with London publishers Simon & Schuster. Their address is now Queensway House, London Road South, Poynton, Cheshire SK12 1NJ.

TITAN BOOKS

Titan release a collected edition of *The Complete Judge Dredd* in the Cursed Earth, a 160-page collection of the classic storyline first published in 2000AD in 1978.

CAPTION

If you've not booked your ticket to the small press event of the year, get your cheque book out. Caption '94 is to be held on Saturday July 9 at the Oxford Union Society, St. Michael's Street, Oxford, opening at 10am and presumably shutting when the bar shuts at 11pm. Guests this year are Hunt Emerson, Carol Swain, Pete Loveday, Leanne Franson and Bryan Talbot. Panels will include 'Sex in the Gutter', 'Five Men on Drugs', and plenty more, there's a workshop led by Steve Whitaker and Jeremy Dennis, and there will be performances by Captain Civilian and after the phenomenally successful performance of *Robin Lives with Bruce and Alfred* last year the National Theatre of Earth Prime, returning with *Baron Winter's House Party*. Price on the door is £12. Go.

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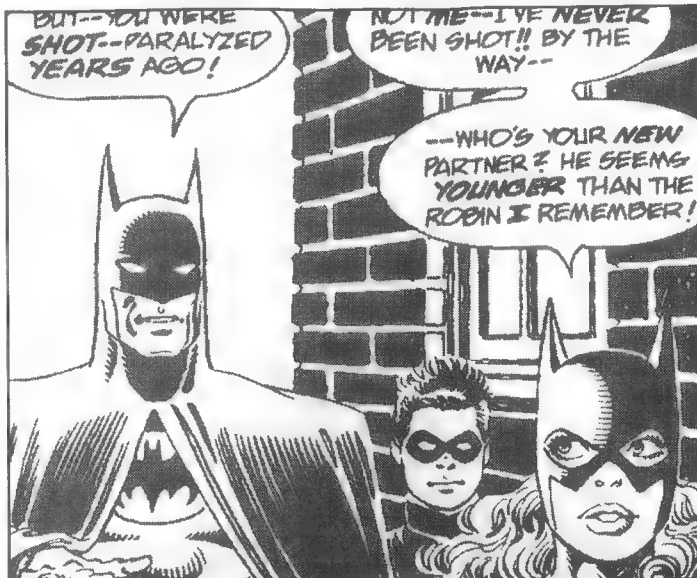
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DC NEWS

ZERO HOUR SPINS OFF INTO 40 ZERO ISSUES

Crisis in Time, the Zero Hour crossover comes to an end with *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time #0* and launches a series of special Zero issue launches. The DC Universe titles with October cover dates, including the whole range of Superman and Batman titles become #0, a chance say DC for retailers and readers to start anew with the entire range of titles set in the reborn DC Universe. The 40 #0 issues, including six new titles, will ship over a 4 week period between August and September.

Mike Carlin, DC's executive editor, said: "Out assignment was clear, [to] make this the best month ever to join the DC Universe for anyone who is not a DC reader already, and the best month ever for reliving and enjoying some of the events that made an existing reader a DC Universe fan. Plus, give both



audiences some facts and insights about the DC Universe that haven't been revealed before."

The only titles to remain outside the framework of the DC Universe are the Vertigo and Milestone lines, plus licensed material such as *Star Trek* and *Judge Dredd*. The following is a list of issue zero titles (and shipping dates): *Action Comics* (Sep 6), *Adventures of Superman* (Aug 30), *Anima* (Sep 6), *Aquaman* (Sep 6), *Batman* (Aug 16), *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* (Aug 30), *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* (Aug 23), *Catwoman* (Sep 6), *Damage* (Sep 6),

The Darkstars (Sep 6), *Deathstroke, the Hunted* (newly retitled, Aug 16), *The Demon* (Aug 23), *Detective Comics* (Aug 30), *Fate* (Aug 30), *Flash* (Aug 16), *Green Arrow* (Sep 6), *Green Lantern* (Aug 23), *Gunfire* (Aug 30), *Guy Gardner: Warrior* (Sep 6), *Hawkman* (Aug 23), *Justice League America* (Aug 23), *Justice League Task Force* (Aug 30), *Legion of Super-Heroes* (Aug 16), *Legionnaires* (Aug 16), *Lobo* (Sep 6), *The New Titans* (Aug 23), *Manhunter* (Sep 6), *Outsiders* (Aug 30), *Primal Force* (Aug 16), *The Ray* (Aug 30), *R.E.B.E.L.S. '94* (Aug 30), *Robin* (Sep 6), *The Spectre* (Aug

16), *Starman* (Aug 23), *Steel* (Aug 30), *Superboy* (Aug 16), *Superman* (Aug 23), *Superman: The Man of Steel* (Aug 16), *Wonder Woman* (Aug 16), and *Xenobrood* (Aug 30).

Of these, six are new titles: *Starman* begins when a villain from the Golden Age exacts a terrible revenge against the original *Starman* Ted Knight by killing the hero's eldest son. Ted's youngest son, the rebellious Jack remains to assume the role of hero and the villain's vengeance won't be complete until the whole Knight family are dead. James Robinson (who already has experience with *The Golden Age*) teams up with Tony Harris & Wade von Grawbadger for the new ongoing series.

Manhunter by Steven Grant & Vince Giarrano is unleashed when musician Chase Lawler uses occult secrets to open a Pandora's Box of terror, releasing a savage primal archetype upon the DC Universe. Losing control of the creature, Lawler can hold it at bay only by assuming the role of the thing he's unleashed, and must become the Manhunter, preying on the creature's intended victims, capturing them if he can - killing them if he must.

Fate is born when Jared Stevens, a soldier of fortune, comes upon the helm of Doctor Fate. When a magical force invades the Earth, Stevens reshapes the helmet into a golden blade and as Fate goes hunting for the arcane evil that pervades the DC Universe. John Francis Moore is joined

ORCS NEST

MEGASNORE

★ COMICS ★

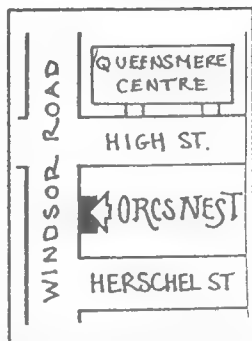
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Steven T. Seagal, Ken Hooper & Barbara Kaalberg are the creative team for *Primal Force*, a unique band of world-spanning adventurers formed by the immortal Dr. Mist to battle the arcane menace known as Cataclysm. The team comprises Tornado, Jack O'Lantern, the Golem, Claw and newcomer Meridian.



R.E.B.E.L.S. '94 #0 spins-off from *L.E.G.I.O.N.* '94 with Vril Dox, Lobo, Stealth, and their teammates forced to commit a violent crime to survive, and now their one-time allies are out for their blood. The creative team of Tom Peyer, Arnie Jorgensen & James Pascoe reveal the true history of the L.E.G.I.O.N. and the lies that the organisation's new tyrant, Lylr Dox, have put in its place...

Finally *Xenobrood* is a 7-issue series (#s 0-6) launches an all new team of crystal-grown heroes discovered when Dr. Zachariah Leight enters a long-forgotten tomb. The crystals he discovers become 4 elementally powered super-beings. Doug Moench, Tomm Coker & Keith Aitken give the new team a baptism of fire. **ROUND-UP** *The Sandman Mystery Theatre Annual* brings together the talents of Alex Ross, John Bolton, George Pratt, David Lloyd, Guy Davis and others in a series of connected stories with a background tale which has Wesley Dodds caught between a killer who is preying on Manhattan's parkgoers - who bears a remarkable resemblance to the Sandman - and the cops. The 64-page special sports a cover by Gavin Wilson & Richard Brunning.

Sandman: A Gallery of Dreams is a 32 page companion to the Death Gallery featuring a cover painted by Dave McKean and portraits of the Sandman by Eddie Campbell, Craig

Hamilton, Tony Harris, Jamie Hewlett, Malcolm Jones III, Bill Koeb, Mike Mignola, Moebius, Alison Seiffer, Jeff Smith, Greg Spalenka, Tom Taggart, Teri S. Wood & Terry Moore and many others, introduced by Neil Gaiman. *Sandman* itself skips a month.

The 6-issue *Jonah Hex: Two-Gun Mojo* is gathered together as a 160-page trade- paperback shipping August 16, priced \$12.95...*Hardware* #20 has the guest creative team of Adam Blaustein, Keith Pollard & Aubrey Bradford...Mark Buckingham takes over as penciller on *Shade the Changing Man* from #54 on top of his regular stint as Chris Bachalo's inker on *Gen-X* for Marvel and penciller of *The Inspector* which Vertigo will publish.

MARVEL NEWS

MARVEL NEWS

Marvel's Greatest Super-Battles is a 176-page trade paperback reprinting some of the finest moments of mayhem that the Marvel Universe have experienced, including the battle of Champion from *Marvel Two-in-One Annual* #7 wherein the creature of that name challenges Hulk, Sasquatch, Namor, Wonder Man, Colossus, Thor, Doc Sampson and Thing to hand-to-hand combat - one at a time, of course. From *Journey Into Mystery* #113 comes the clash of Mighty Thor and Incredible Hulk by Stan Lee & Jack Kirby; Sabretooth sinks his teeth into the X-Men in two tales from the 'Mutant Massacre' crossover from *Uncanny X-Men* #212-213, the latter with art by Alan Davis & Paul Neary; Frank Castle's past comes back to haunt him in a tale from *Punisher War Journal* #10 by Carl Potts & Jim Lee; and Spider-Man battles Scorpion, Blacklash and the Rhino from a tale by David Michelinie & Todd McFarlane, first presented in *Astonishing Spider-Man* #s 318-319. Priced \$15.95 the book ships 5 July.

Justice: Four Balance is a 4-issue mini-series by Fabian Nicieza, Craig Brasfield & Frank Turner which offers new insights into the troubled telekinetic member of the New Warriors, his father's abuse, and a glimpse into the future - thanks to the Hate Manager - where he too abuses his own children. Guest stars will include the Thing, the Yancy Street Gang, Firestar, Night Thrasher, and Captain America.

Solo gets his own 4-issue series care of Eric Fein & Ron Randall called, not surprisingly, *Solo*. Secret pieces of Solo's origin are revealed as he is thrust against the terrorist organisation known as A.R.E.S.

Spider-Man #50 is a 48-page

cover-enhanced special in which Kraven the Hunter decides to clear his name by ridding himself of his father's greatest enemy. The mysterious figure that has been appearing in various Spidey titles over the past few months turns up at Aunt May's house, and all will be revealed next month in the 'Power and Responsibility' crossover.

'Generation Next' is a 4-part series launching in *Uncanny X-Men* #316 wherein the White Queen, Sabretooth and Jubilee set out to discover and save a whole generation of new mutants from Phalanx, leading to the creation of Gen-X. Part two can be found in *X-Men* #36. Over in *X-Factor* #106 there's part 1 of 'Life Signs' which continues in *X-Force* #38 and concludes in *Excalibur* #82 next month. The life signs in question are those of the Phalanx-revived Doug Ramsey, back from the dead...

Fantastic Force make their debut in the concluding episode of 'Nobody Gets Out Alive' in *Fantastic Four* #392. The Dark Raider is unmasked for the first time and there's plenty of speculation as to what will be happening next. A sneaky preview for next month reveals a new Fantastic Force title by Greg Wright, Mike Gustovich & Don Hudson, featuring Franklin Richards, Vibraxis, Mydas and Kismet plus a foil-stamped cover, and a split *Fantastic Four* grimly held together by Ben after Johnny has quit and Sue is off searching for Reed. For July there's also the *Fantastic Four Unlimited* #7 with the Thing getting some practise of being alone in an all-Thing story by Roy Thomas, Herb Trimpe & Bud LaRosa.

Captain America: Streets of Poison is a 128-page trade paperback reprinting *Captain America* #s 272-377, Mark Gruenwald & Ron Lim's tale wherein Captain America was under the influence of a new experimental drug...The Red Norvell Thor



returns in *Thor* #478...Whyte Out is a new villain debuting in *Thunderstrike* #12...Have you tried *Hellstorm* yet? Warren is also doing the second *Ghost Rider Annual* with artists Javier Saltares & Mike Witherby, a tale told from the Scarecrow's point of view...*Hyperkind Unleashed* #1 is a wrap-up of threads from the failed *RazorLine* of Clive Barker stories... 'Myth Conceptions' is a new storyline for *Hulk* #421, with Pantheon in search of the errant Agamemnon so they can put him on trial for his dealings with the Trojans...*Marvel Age* #140 is the final issue; it will be replaced in August by *Marvel Super Heroes Magazine*...*Morbius* celebrates his 25th issue with a fifth ink cover and a new direction from new creative team Lisa Trusiani & Craig Gilmore: beginning with the abduction of a young woman, Lena, who is sold into 'adult entertainment' slavery in New York. Morbius goes in pursuit and is hit by cupid's arrow...and a new era dawns for the *New Warriors* in issue #51 when we find out who will stay and who will go from the 14 new members they seem to have accumulated... 'War Journal: Final Entry' begins in *Punisher War Journal* #70 - the end of Frank Castle?...Joe Kubert returns to the artwork in *Punisher War Zone* #31 for the star of the 6-part 'River of Blood'...Ian Edginton writes the back-up to *Spider-Man 2099 Annual* #1...Warren Ellis takes over on *Doom 2099* from issue 26 with Argentinian artist Alcatena. He'll also pick up the reins of *Ghost Rider* from around issue 55...*Hulk 2099* will get his own title, and *Rogue* should see a limited series begin in October...

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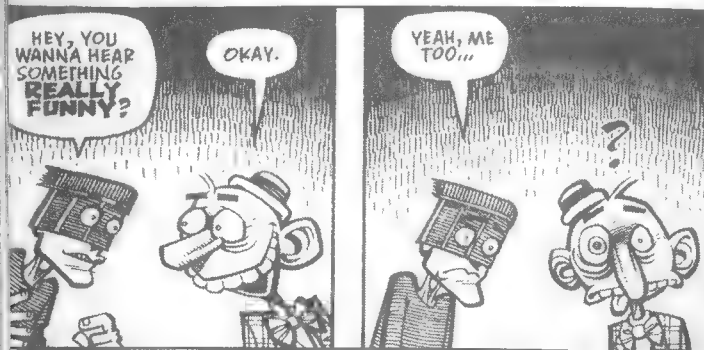
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issues. The name change came about after legal complications with Eclipse Comics over the Art Dekko character in Scott McLeod's *Zot!*.

Art D'Ecco came to an end after four issues and in its place was born *Zoot*. Like *Hate* and *Eightball* before it, *Zoot* forsook the *Love and Rockets* magazine format and adopted a smaller comicbook format which was, arguably, more commercial. "We overcompensated for the fact that the change of format might sell a few more

awful puns. "Andrew likes to sneak in a lot of real issues and topics but not at the expense of the dumb jokes." Having appeared fleetingly in *Zoot* they're likely to appear again even though Andrew isn't keen.

Zoot also features several continuing strips which appear intermittently in each issue. One of the most memorable is *The Derek Seals Story*. Derek Seals first appeared to Andrew in a dream and new episodes appear whenever Andrew dreams of him again. It depicts the strange meetings and growing relationships between the Author (Andrew) and an enigmatic writer, Derek Seals, who refuses to grant an interview to a journalist since she has actually read his book. "Derek Seals purports to be an autobiographical story but is actually a complete fiction. It's a reaction to all the autobiographical stuff (currently being published) which is kind of like a bandwagon. We thought Let's make something up and call it autobiographical for a couple of years and see what kind of critical reaction we get."

Roger is still best known to many for visualising the unbelievably hideous 'Knuckles the Malevolent Nun'. Created by New Zealand comics guru Cornelius Stone, Knuckles first appeared in a Kiwi comics anthology before graduating to Auckland University's newspaper and music magazine as well as inspiring theatre plays and radio shows. It wasn't long before Knuckles made her mark on the international scene, spawning a two-issue series from Fantagraphics as well as showing up in Roger's 'solo album' - *Leather Underwear*, A1 and a promised *Deadline* slot which has failed to materialise. "I've always seen Knuckles as a stunted dwarf," says Roger, and certainly she's pushed the boundaries of good taste in her time, although Roger adds, "I feel that Knuckles has had her day, although that's not to say that I won't return to the character one day."

KNUCKLE BOY

STEPHEN JEWELL TALKS TO ROGER LANGRIDGE

Roger Langridge was in for a rude shock when his new strip 'Diabolical Liberty' first appeared in the pages of *Deadline* last November. The pages were completely out of order. "I got a phone call from (Deadline editor) Frank Wynne, who said that he would find out whose fault it was. He rang back later and sheepishly admitted that it was his fault!"

Some readers apparently thought it was meant to be that way - a new sophisticated narrative. 'Diabolical Liberty' was subsequently reprinted in the right order in the next issue, so everybody went home happy.

Roger has come a long way from when he first launched *Art Dekko* as a mini-comic in Auckland, New Zealand in 1988 with his brother Andrew. "I got a couple of issues and mailed them off to Gary Groth and he wrote back and said 'Do a comic for us'."

"An *Art D'Ecco* one-shot was published by Fantagraphics Books which was soon followed by further

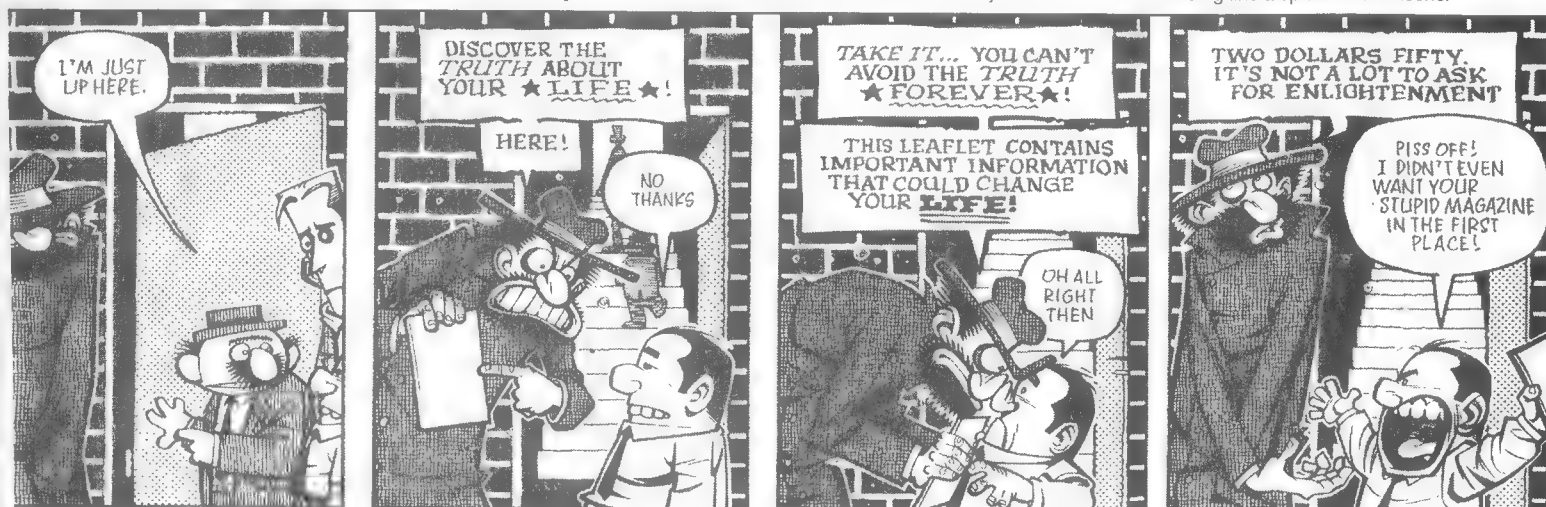
copies by making the contents more obscure," say Langridge. *Zoot* has also seen a creative change of direction as it moves from *Art D'Ecco*'s self-referential stream-of-consciousness to more slice of life style stories. "Zoot is Andrew's baby," he says, Roger and Andrew working very closely together, Andrew producing the more involved scripts. "I'll draw it, he'll edit it and tell me what to change. There'll be obscure stuff like a painting on the wall in the background which is part of the overall thing and has got to go in there." No editorial input is provided by Gary Groth, who allows the Langridges to do whatever the hell they want. "We send stuff off when we finish it." New issues of *Zoot* are scheduled whenever Roger completes the cover.

The best known characters in *Art D'Ecco* were the ubiquitous *Art D'Ecco* himself and the much maligned Gump. "Art D'Ecco and Gump are kind of a classic double act; the smart guy and the stupid one, like Abbot and Costello or Laurel and Hardy." They're based on doodles that Andrew used to draw in the margins of his schoolwork. *Art D'Ecco* and the Gump celebrates the sheer fun of comics with a love of dumb jokes and

STRAIGHTJACKET

Roger was also behind one of the most controversial strips to ever appear in Fleetway's *Judge Dredd Magazine* so far, 'The Straightjacket Fits'. "Opinion was split 50/50 positive and negative. Really young readers and older readers over 16 really liked it, but there was a huge gap from 14 up who didn't." Taking its name from the acclaimed N.Z. band and reading like a spaced-out *Prisoner*

Art © ROGER LANGRIDGE



SMOKE DAMAGE

A psychiatrist wants to investigate the idea that dogs become like their owners, so he assembles a group of dogs. One belongs to an architect, the second to a mathematician, and the third to a writer. The architect's dog is placed before a pile of biscuits and he pushes them together to make a little house. The psychiatrist is delighted. The mathematician's dog lays out the biscuits in a row and woofs out the number of them. The psychiatrist is thrilled. And the writer's dog eats all the biscuits, screws the other two dogs and asks for the afternoon off.

Writing is not a natural pursuit, and tends to attract unnatural people. It is not remotely normal to stay locked in a small room, making weird rubbish up out of their head, typing it up and getting paid for it. The novelist and screenwriter Ring Lardner always said "writeing (sic) is a nag." David Morrell, writer of *First Blood*, puts it more expansively: "Most writers are writers not because they want to be but because they have no choice; there is a compulsion in them that forces them towards that typewriter in preference to all other things."

Does this explain a few things? Why Ian Edginton keeps two beautiful lesbian gardeners? Why Gordon Rennie, like a Scots Jeffrey Bernard, needs to down most of a bottle of vodka before he can write one word? Why Dave Stone can be found walking in circles at conventions, jabbering darkly about Hair and Sex and Leather and Death and Lubricant and Sarcophagi? Does it begin to answer the jet-setting champagne-soaked decadence of folk like Grant Morrison and Garth Ennis? Or Peter Milligan's near-fetishistic fascination with the blisteringly-dim game of cricket? Stuart Green's sweaty lust for football?

Actually, no. But it's worth thinking about. And it has filled a couple of paragraphs in a month where not much has happened.

Oh, people are running around predicting a Summer of Doom II, in which the Return of the Glut will come back to kick all our bums. Nah.. The Good Rumour is that all those tiny superhero-book operations, the Dagger Enterprises and the Triumphants and all the rest of 'em, will simply be cut out of the market. I think that this slaughter of the small and weak and crap will encompass Jim Shooter's operation, Defiant, as well. This is a shame, because I met Jim Shooter last year, and found him surprisingly approachable, friendly and thoughtful. I'd like to say that his books deserve saving, but I can't. That Stifflingly-Dull house-style

that Shooter appears to have partly originated at Valiant became part and parcel of the Defiant books, without the artistic class of Barry Windsor-Smith. Shooter, perhaps more than anyone, should know that superhero comics derive their success and enjoyment from energy. The sort of thing that makes an ostensible superhero book like Mike Allred's *Madman* so enjoyable - the manic pop thrill of the thing, that three-minute-single drive. Defiant's books *plod*, and I think that'll seal their disappearance.

Chances are that I just haven't heard a lot of information; I've been pretty much strapped to this machine since the last column. The three-issue gig on *Excalibur* swiftly and strangely became a complete take-over of the book; I wrote my first issue with the same kind of jumpy construction and neo-intensity as I do an issue of *Hellstorm* (neo-intensity - how intense can you be with a Code-Approved Marvel comic?), the atmosphere of encroaching weirdness and unwelcome violence (want to see cute widdle Kitty Pryde stub out a cigarette on Moira MacTaggart, X-fans?). I thought, hell, it's only three issues. Who cares if the management wince a bit? I didn't expect the maniacs to offer me the book full-time immediately after reading the first script. I think I'm running my career in reverse. From the untamed, drug-soaked, foul-mouthed *Lazarus Churchyard*, to an X-Men title. What with my slightly-expanding waistline, generated since I moved in with Niki and started eating regularly, I'm starting to see the ghost of Orson Welles in the mirror - from *Citizen Kane* to sherry commercials. Christ.

I took *Excalibur*, which is not really my kind of book in a lot of ways, for a couple of reasons. First off, I find it comfortable working with the editor, Suzanne Gaffney, and her boss, Bob Harras. That's important. I could fill another column just talking about editors. They range from the retarded, to the evil, to the amiable-but-slightly-dim, to the impossible-to-find (ex-Vertigo editor Tom Peyer was a lovely guy, but the bastard refused to ever pick up the phone, and could completely vanish for days at a time). To discover a normal human, decent, supportive, intelligent editor...well, let me tell you a story:

A bunch of people were in a boat, in deep waters. One guy we won't name, who was the editor, fell out of the boat. Suddenly, the others notice a black fin in the water, heading for them like a

torpedo. Shark. The editor can't get out of the water. The shark's nearly there. Panic. Suddenly, the shark veers left, heading away from the editor and boat. "It's a miracle," one of them says. "Bollocks," says another, who happened to be a writer. "That was professional courtesy."

Secondly (and these are *not* in order of importance), the money's good. Let's be honest. *Excalibur* is a Top Fifty book, and the royalties will be not bad. That money will free up a lot of time ordinarily spent writing proposals, making exploratory phone calls and all that shit associated with Synopsis Hell. That time can now be spent writing things that are important to me. I can do something in the back of my head without worrying that I should be writing to pay the bills. If I ever get the noir graphic novel *Viscera* off the ground, it'll be entirely due to *Excalibur*.

Thirdly, an X-book is a profile-raising book in the marketplace, and hopefully it'll help get *Hellstorm* some more notice - or any bloody notice! And, lastly, when I was a kid, I remember really enjoying Alan Moore and Jamie Delano's Captain Britain stories. Wouldn't it be nice to do something worthwhile with the character again?

Oops. Stop Press. Between ending that page of typescript and starting this one, I've just been given *Doom 2099* by Marvel as well. This, combined with various other miniseries and one-shot projects, means that I'm now writing about one script a week for the next two years. What's wrong with me? Am I turning into Fabian Nicieza? Am I...sick?

Or was David Morrell right?

Warren Ellis, burnished love object at Marvel Comics, writes *Hellstorm*, *Excalibur* (from #83) and *Doom 2099* (from #26) for them. *Silencers* is due from Epic in the autumn, and *The Inspector* comes next year from Vertigo.

This month's illu. is the world premier of Bill Sienkiewicz's cover to *Excalibur* #83 © Marvel Comics



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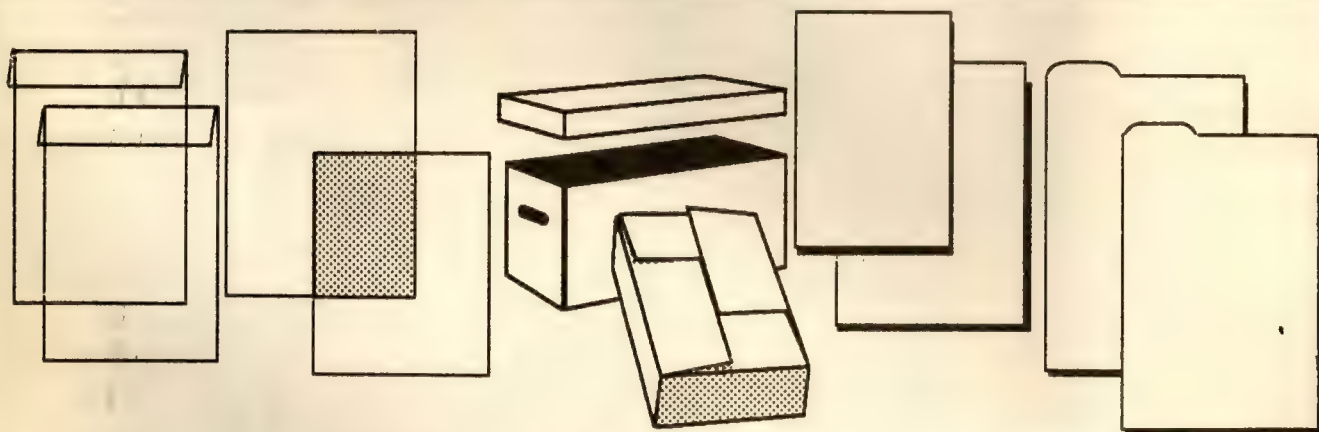
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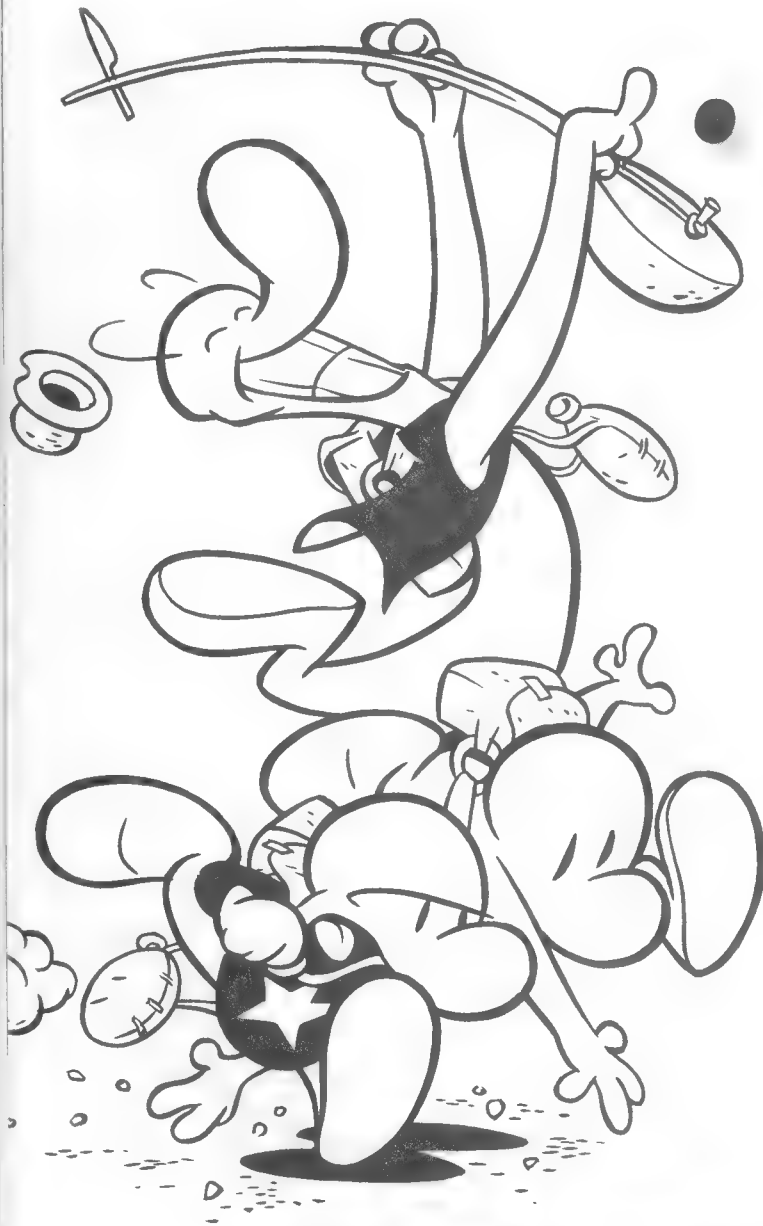
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After being run out of Boneville, the three Bone cousins, Fone Bone, Phoney Bone and Smiley Bone, are separated and lost in a vast, uncharted desert.

One by one, they find their way into a deep, forested valley filled with wonderful and terri-

...Into



IF YOU'VE YET TO DISCOVER JEFF SMITH'S ENCHANTING SELF-PUBLISHED SERIES BONE AND THE INHABITANTS OF BONEVILLE, HERE'S DAVID BISHOP TO INTRODUCE SMITH, FONE BONE, AND FRIENDS AND THE IDEA THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUMP OUT GARISH-COLOURED SUPERHEROICS EACH MONTH TO ACHIEVE CRITICAL ACCLAIM (AND WIN OUR BEST NEW WRITER AWARD)

It's hard to talk about *Bone* without a certain evangelical zealotry creeping into your voice. It's just a small, black and white self-published comic but compared to the standard steroid-overdose superheroic slush that dominates the shelves of most comic shops, *Bone* is a breath of fresh air.

Funny, charming, enchanting, the sort of comic you can give to a

female friend to read without fear of embarrassment. *Bone* is a gem in a mountain of comics dross. (There's that zealotry, right on time.)

And the most incredible thing about *Bone*? It's a big success.

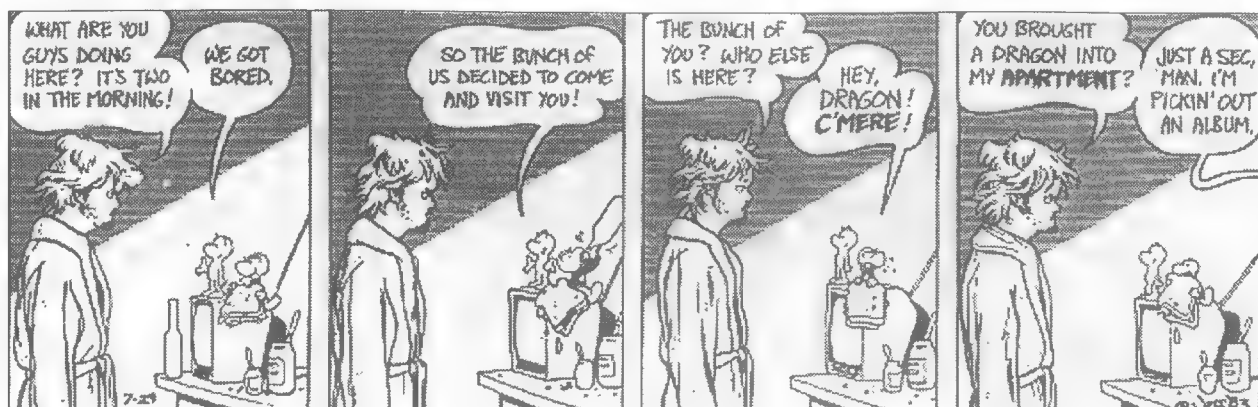
Little over a year ago, few had heard of *Bone*, let alone seen a copy. Suddenly, it started getting mentioned favourably in comics magazines like *Wizard* and *Hero Illustrated*. Back issues prices started to soar.

Most bizarre of all, this black and white comic started appearing on the HOT lists of books to buy. Against all odds, *Bone* was a hit.

Back to 1994, and the writer/artist of *Bone*, Jeff Smith, comes to the UK for a tour, spreading the word about his creation. The perfect opportunity for an interview, face-to-face. (Actually Smith is so tall, you have to sit him down to even get close to being face to face with him.) Together with his wife, he had arrived in Glasgow packing little in the way of expectations.

'We had no idea if *Bone* had ever been here. I mean, we get letters from England, but we get letters from everywhere, Germany, Singapore,' he explained. 'We had no way of knowing how many copies or what issues had gotten over here.'

The response at the annual Glasgow comic convention was almost overwhelming, with a constant queue at his table, readers anxious to get back issues, a sketch, anything! 'The response has been great, it's



really cool.' He believes the comic is acquiring a reputation in the UK, mostly by word of mouth. That was how it started to grow in America.

'Bone' is the kind of book you read, not the kind of book you collect. That's good, because it's something I like. Everybody who writes wants people to read it, not just polybag it, right?' he says.

The characters featured in the

"Why don't you make Fone Bone talk through thought balloons?" I couldn't believe him, I said why? "Because Snoopy and Garfield talk in thought balloons." Smith shakes his head at this logic. 'So they're telepathic, right. They've got some sort of mind-link?'

Instead he put his characters aside and worked in animation for the next six years. But the urge to tell the story of the Bones kept nagging. In

squirrily little concept, with little doucey characters and humans together. Maybe it just wouldn't work.'

Something positive did happen. Initially, he just got letters from readers. Then other comics professionals began contacting him with praise and encouragement. Since he was making no money and selling no copies, that was 'absolutely essential'.

the valley



comic - the three cousins Bone, the humans, the animals and the 'stupid, stupid rat creatures' - first appeared in a three-panel comic strip Smith drew for his college newspaper.

'In the college strip, I kind of made it up as I went along. When I finished it, I was able to look back and see what the actual story was!'

After leaving college, Smith wanted to make his creations into a syndicated strip, to appear in newspapers across America. So he went to see the strip syndicates in New York.

'My experience with editors there was not good. Basically, they wanted me to do the Bones as the Smurfs!' He remembers with a chill one particular incident that opened his eyes to why he couldn't work for them.

'One editor said to me

1991 he started work on *Bone* the comic, but after his experience with the syndicates, decided to self publish it. Smith worked twelve hours a day, seven days a week, writing, drawing and publishing the first four issues.

'I was actually more on schedule then, doing the comic part-time, than when I went full-time!' he says now, laughing at the irony. 'Unfortunately, I entered the market at exactly the wrong time!'

The direct comics market had not forgotten the pain of the black and white glut of the late '80s. So *Bone* had a very hard birth, with no money for advertising and a built-in prejudice against it.

'The sales on number one were very small. After that, they dropped right through the floor!'

The trend continued with sales falling lower and lower for issues three and four. But Smith had promised himself he would publish six issues. If nothing positive happened, then that was reality.

'Let's face it, this was a

To help build word of mouth, Smith went to distributor trade days and showed his work directly to comic shop owners. He also showed *Bone* to creators like Dave Sim (who gave it an eight-page plug at the back of his own comic, *Cerebus*) and the editors of *Comic Buyers Guide*, who featured *Bone* in their pages. Orders began creeping up a little on issue five, then a dramatic leap on issue six. From

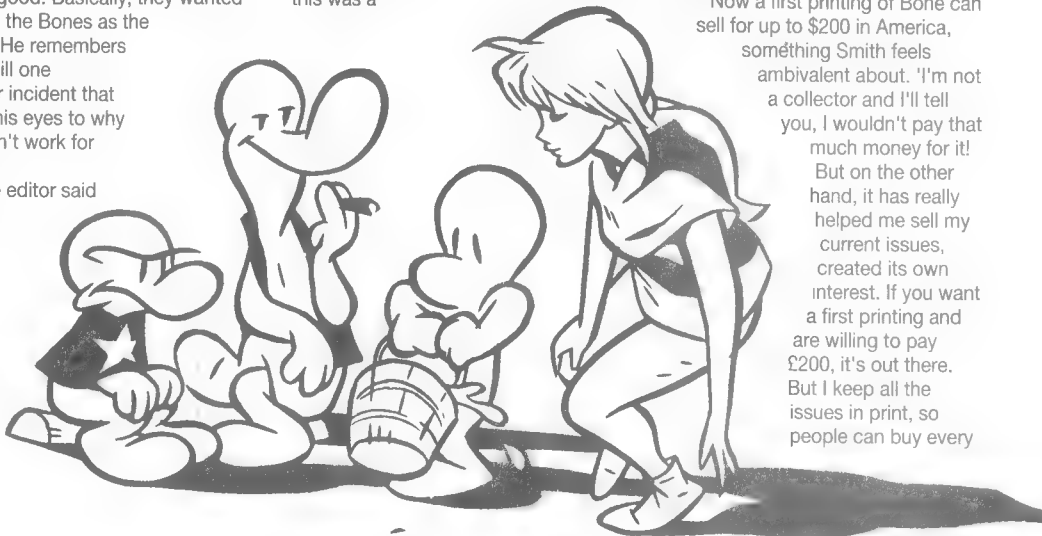


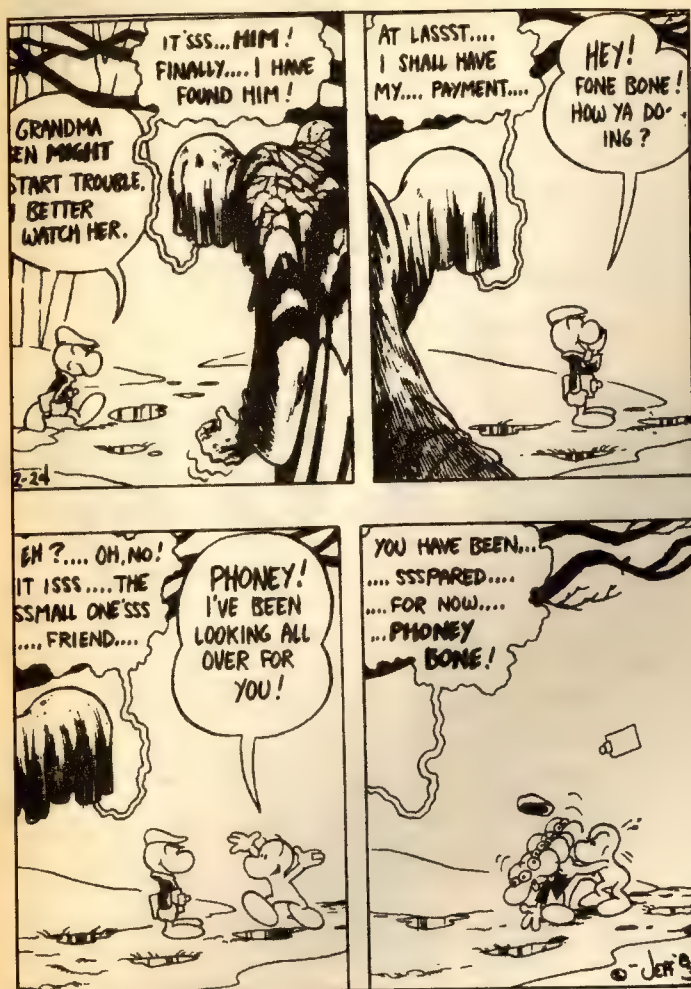
then, orders have climbed ever upwards.

Now a first printing of *Bone* can sell for up to \$200 in America,

something Smith feels ambivalent about. 'I'm not a collector and I'll tell you, I wouldn't pay that much money for it!'

But on the other hand, it has really helped me sell my current issues, created its own interest. If you want a first printing and are willing to pay £200, it's out there. But I keep all the issues in print, so people can buy every





one at cover price too.'

With the success has come the inevitable Bone merchandising, so far restricted to a few t-shirts, a graphic album collecting issues one to six, a trading card set ('not something I'd want very much but it helps me and the retailers sell copies') and, soon, a cold cast Fone Bone figurine. The last of these particularly excites Smith.

'Now that's something I really want. I mean, I want one of those with all my heart! I've seen it and it's dead on, just perfect.' He wants to avoid turning Bone into just another product like Garfield, merchandised to death, bland and meaningless.

'My philosophy is different - I will always write and draw and ink Bone. So, I'll only have so much time to do the other side of things.' As a result, Bone stays bi-monthly, no matter how much Bone fans might plead for it to be published more often.

Just time for one last question, then. Unlike the vast majority of comics, Bone is read and enjoyed by men and women. Wives, girlfriends, and children all find it accessible and fun. How has it achieved this universal appeal without being bland or dull?

'I can't really explain it, I didn't set out to do a general audience thing. What I purposefully tried not to do was target my audience. I believe you do a work and people will like it or not, you'll create your own natural market,' says Smith firmly.

'I hear about guys who are into comics, Bone is the only comic their wives will read, I hear that all the time.

I get letters from fathers who read it to their kids. I get letters from parents who will buy two copies, one for themselves, one for the kids to wreck!

'My only explanation is I created the characters, the Bones, when I was a kid myself. Today, I'm writing stories I always wanted to read when I was young. I used to love Asterix and Uncle Scrooge, but I always wanted them to go on a more dangerous adventure than just there and back again.

Something a little more hardcore. Hopefully, that's Bone!



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WHERE THE VERMIN REIGN

FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF HIS FIRST GRAPHIC NOVEL, STEVE HOLLAND MEETS UP WITH JAMES HERBERT THE MAN BEHIND THE RATS, FOG, LAIR AND A HOST OF OTHER HORROR NOVELS THAT HAVE TOPPED THE BEST-SELLERS LISTS.

On my way to meet James Herbert I pass through the heartlands of British journalism, along Fleet Street, past Bush House (spelt Bvsh Hovse if you please) and all I could think about was all the crap headlines that he's inspired: the alliteration of Herbert and Horror seems to make it inevitable: Meet Herbert the Horrible and Oh Rats! It's Herbert's Horrors are two of the less than inspired screamers that have been applied to his interviews. When I mentioned it to him he laughs. What is it about journalists? "I don't know," he says. "You tell me," throwing the whole thing back in my face. "Last year I said I'd become a bit of a hermit nowadays because I was happy to be at home working, because I'm really happy about living where I live, and as soon as I said it I knew they were going to use it: Herbert the Hermit!" And they did.

We're at the Savoy where James Herbert is promoting his first graphic novel, *The City*. With sales of his books topping thirty two million ("I ain't done bad," says Herbert, smiling) there are a lot of people wanting interviews; the whole process is run like a well oiled machine with only the occasional grit-in-the-cogs cock up that risks bringing everything grinding to a halt. This is the first day of many, and today Sky TV have managed to set everything back because they couldn't decide which vase of flowers to have in the background. No such problem with your *soaraway Comic World*.

Herbert is warm, honest, friendly, and wants to get his clothes out of their suitcases before the creases set in. No time to unpack: the wolves are hungry for their scraps of Herbert's time. I get the impression that interviews are not his favourite part of being a writer and he gets to hear the same questions time and time again, the most inevitable being...

"Why do you write horror," he growls. "The other dumb question is *Where do you get your ideas from?* Who the fuck knows. They're just there. I always try to give a civilised answer but at the end of the day when you've been asked it so many times..."

That's the lot of writers, folks. Nobody would dream of asking a boxer why he throws a punch, or a footballer



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That's the lot of writers, folks.
Nobody would dream of asking a boxer
why he throws a punch, or a footballer
why he kicks a ball, but writers are
always asked 'Why do you write' and
'Where do you get your ideas from' as if
no writer has any original talent or
imagination and has to steal ideas from
somewhere...

"I suppose you could interpret it that
way," says Herbert, "but I don't think
that's what they mean. I hope not after
all these years. If that's what they've
been saying to me..." He rings a neck in
mine.

"They're impossible questions to
answer. Years ago I did an interview for
a radio station up north somewhere; they
had an Irish presenter and the first
question was *Why do you write horror?*
Well, I write horror because...and so on.
'Is that roit' says the presenter. 'And why
do people read horror books?' 'Because
they like the precarious thrill, and all the
usual bullshit. 'Is that roit,' says the
presenter. 'So why do you write horror?'

"That was it. I stayed there, but it
came to a swift end! But what else can
you ask a writer? How original can you
be with your questions? I guess we'll

find
out. "He
laughs, and I get onto a
subject I know pronto.

vase
of flowers to
have in the background.

NIGHT TIME IN THE CITY

You all know James Herbert, I guess.
Author of *The Rats*, *The Fog*, *The Spear*,
Creed, *Lair* and a whole shelf-full of
others, yeh? Before becoming one of
Britain's biggest-selling authors he was
the first the typographer, then art
director of a leading advertising agency,
later promoted to Group Head at the
tender age of 26. Prior to that he'd been a
paste-up man at a smaller studio;
before that a student at Hornsey College
of Art, and before college he'd been in
short trousers which is where most
people have their life-long loves
ingrained as firmly as the dirt in their
knees.

"I remember *Wizard* and *Hotspur*,
even *The Beano* and *Dandy*, but the
comic I always loved - and nobody's
ever heard of it - was *Casey Ruggles*.
Have you heard of it?"

When I nod and say "the newspaper
strip by Warren Tufts?" a smile creases
his face and he jumps in as
enthusiastically as any fan on meeting
someone who admits an interest in his
favourite subject.

"You got it," he says. "That was the
comic I used to get from Petticoat Lane
when I lived there. I used to go round the
stalls at the market because over here
they were bought out as comic books by
Millers in Hackney Road. I was born just
off Hackney Road.

"Millers did *Marvelman*; I used to
hate *Marvelman* - not a patch on Captain
Marvel! But *Casey Ruggles*...that's
where I learned to write; they were so
advanced for their time. They weren't
kids stuff at all, they covered rape,
incest, all sorts of things. For a cowboy
comic it was incredible.

"The only time I ever wrote a fan
letter in my life was to Warren Tufts, and
that was when I was thirty. I rang up
Hanna Barbera because somebody told
me he was worked there as an animator
and got his address, wrote a letter and
got a cautious reply back from his wife



asking what I wanted to know, and I did this long letter - eleven pages - and we became good friends. Pen pals. I told him everything, about what his comics meant to me and that I'd learned more from *Casey Ruggles* than I did in four

years in art school!

"He was going to come over and meet me, but I went out to Africa on one of those safari holidays and when we got back there was a letter saying Warren had been killed in a plane crash; he'd built his own plane and taken it up on a test-flight and had a heart attack, crashing into a mountain side."

Because of his background in comics and art, *The City* wasn't such an unnatural step for the novelist:

"The reason I did a graphic novel is because I had an idea for the Rats

saga that I never wanted to write. For me it finished with *Domain* - the last of the trilogy - but I'd researched it so much that I knew there was another story after that one. Only I didn't want to write it.

"But when Pan said 'We'd like you to do an original graphic novel for us' I thought *Well, I've got this idea and I don't want to write a book for it, what better than a graphic novel*. I didn't have to write it - I just did a storyboard, just drew out the panels very, very roughly. And then we saw lots of artists' work, and the one that I really liked, and the art director of the publisher also liked, was Ian Miller, a brilliant artist. He made a good idea great. The thing about this book - as with all good comic books - is that you can read through it and enjoy the story, and then you can go back frame by frame and look at all the details you've missed. Ian made it excellent."

As well as the detail in the artwork, you notice a rhythm in the text which surprised me when I first came to the book. The text is incredibly sparse.

"That was one of the things I insisted on, that we use discipline because I hate comics or graphic novels where the lettering is all over the place and confusing. I wanted a tight visual structure as well as a tight story structure. Ian stuck pretty well to what I told him; I didn't want zig-zagged panels all over the place, I wanted the reader to be able to read it at his leisure without having to work too hard."

Since most of the general public are picture illiterate that's not such a bad idea. "I like to see a good clean page, and that was Ian's brief: to keep it tight. I had to draw him back on some of the ideas he put in because although they were quite...brilliant, I'll use that word again, but they were a bit over-imaginative. I didn't want to go that way, I wanted there to be some kind of logic to the whole story,

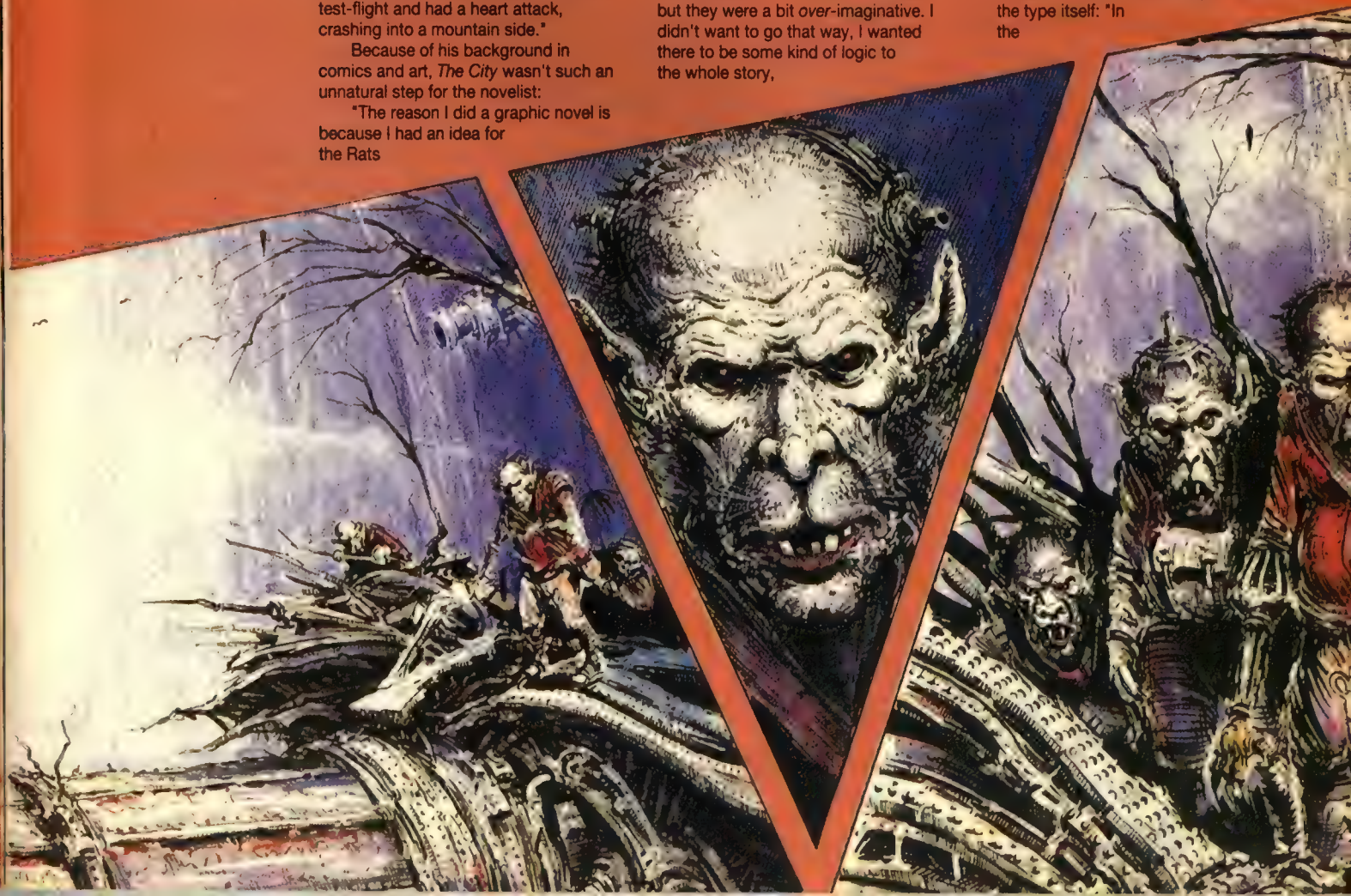
something I would want to read myself. That was tough.

"There was one scene here," he says, flicking through a copy of the book, "where we had...not a contretemps - we didn't argue - but Ian had *this* smaller," indicating a panel, "and I wanted this real slow build up as we were going up the stairs - my storyboard had the frames even more elongated, full page - and then the next page to have real impact. That was our only point of disagreement because he'd done it so much smaller. But he did it right in the end."

"The only thing that really pissed me off was the lettering. There's a lot of screeching in the book and all the lettering was in colour and interfered with the illustrations - all these jazzy reds, yellows and greens and they were destroying the pictures. You couldn't look at the pictures any more because all you were seeing was the lettering. All the captions had a white border which I made the printer take out."

"The work I had to do afterwards was a lot harder than doing the story because I had to go through the book frame by frame and re-do all the colouring of the lettering so that it was integrated with the pictures."

If you're wondering why Herbert has such power over his work it's not simply a case of wanting his own way: he actually understands what he's on about because before of his training in typography and design. More than any other writer Herbert follows his books all the way through the production cycle, getting involved in the design and promotion, much of which he dreams up himself. Not simply the choice of cover illustrations, but the whole presentation of his work from the title pages to the type itself: "In the



and the whole point of *Portent*: we've a great capacity for messing things up, and by God-don't we do it!"

As a writer Jim created the James Herbert Genre of horror writing which has plagued him ever since. Not the pessimism, not even the global catastrophe, but he switched on British horror to violence and sex and was the spark that lit the little-animal-gets-big fire that exploded with the likes of Guy N. Smith and Harry Adam Knight until even the humble earthworm became a menace.

But, and this is what people seem to miss, Herbert only wrote two 'James Herbert' novels - *Rats* and *The Fog* - before diversifying, writing *The Survivor* and *Fluke*, the latter so untypical of his earlier books that Herbert's purist horror fans couldn't understand it and many slayed it in review as a failed experiment. In retrospect, it stands out as maybe the first real James Herbert book, the one where he eschewed typical horror trappings and went off in directions that would eventually lead him to *Moon*, *The Magic Cottage*, *Creed* and elsewhere.

"Every book I've done I've tried to do something different," says Jim. "I'll return to a theme, but horror is such a wide field. You can do so much, so why go back and do the same old thing every time? I try to change the style, the tone of voice, the content - it's still James Herbert and people should know that they're always going to get a good read, but I don't want to bore them. I don't

want to be the literary equivalent of the *Carry On* films, I want to do something new each time and there's a lot of territory to explore out there.

"Some people say 'You're not so violent any more, not so graphic...' Well, I've *done* that, it's been done to death, and I want to move on. I want to do other things and when the story needs a bit of violence I'll go back to it, but for God's sake, you can't churn out the same stuff over and over again.

"Once you resort to formula, your own interest is going to wain. Its got to wain. You're not going to want to write because you'll know what you're going to do each time. There's no challenge, you've got to move on all the time. You can't stand still."

The fact is, just when you think you understand James Herbert, he'll change the rules. The last few years have seen, outside the novel *Portent*, a photo book of locations that he's used in his novels (yes, they're all set in real places) entitled *Dark Places*, and the collection of biographical sketches, interviews and critical snapshots by diverse hands that made up *By Horror Haunted*. "I've been lucky the last couple of years, and now doing *The City* and shooting the film (of *Fluke*), it's a bit of a diversion for me. It just broadens your outlook, and it's nice to do."

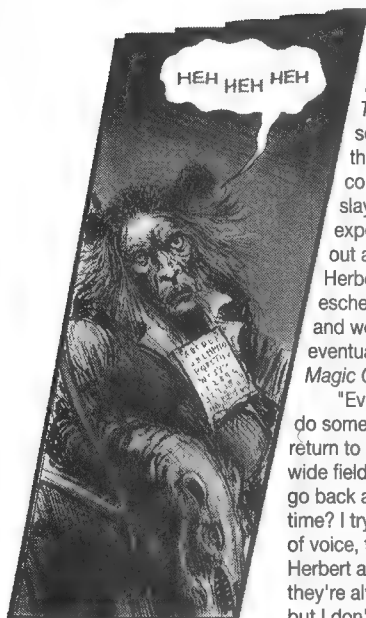
Knowing he likes to keep his readers guessing, would he go back to graphic novels again? "I honestly don't know. It was very enjoyable for me, and a lot more work in the end than I thought it would be, but actually sitting there doing the storyboard took me right

back to the comics I used to draw as a kid, so I'd like to do it again. I don't know when I'd get the time, or whether my publisher would ask me to do another one...we'll just have to wait and see."

I walk away from the Savoy with the impression that Jim Herbert can be anything you want him to be, depending on how you approach him. If you go in with the idea that he is *Just a horror writer*, that's what he'll be. He'll talk to you about horror, and what he believes it means to people, to his readers and to him, and you'll leave with the idea that he's a thoughtful horror writer. If you think *He's a writer*, then that's what he'll be. He'll talk to you about his writing, how he feels he has grown over the last two decades. He'll accept compliments about the sales figures, but he'll be more interested if you've noticed that the books are very much a package, one which he spends an incredible amount of time considering and designing. You'll leave with the idea that his care as a writer goes beyond simple words on a page.

Jim tells me that while he's writing his novels he doesn't think of the million plus fans they will be read by. He does, however, craft each book uniquely, taking care of details and making sure that each of us gets the best he can offer. Most of the people queuing up to do interviews have never met him, but all of us think we know him through his work, and he's taking care of us as any friend would.

And I've started calling him Jim Herbert rather than James. **CW**



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quick. I think that's a really important skill. If you can't do it within a certain amount of time then the whole project somehow becomes of less value. You've got to be able to do it to a high standard within a certain amount of time and if you haven't got that skill then you probably won't make it as a comic artist. One of the things that I've always believed about drawing is that it is a case of getting more out of less."

"Possibly Dave asked me to colour his artwork because, not only did he already know I was working on computer graphics, but he knows my painting work and he knows that I use an airbrush. If you come to something new, you always need to bring something of yourself. The fact that I know the airbrush well and I know how to give a certain tonal feel or look to a painting is a skill that you still need even with a computer, especially with a paint program. It isn't enough to know the

Martha goes to WW

A panel in an early issue of Vortex's Mr X comic has the title character kneeling half-naked, furiously sweating over a pile of papers on the floor. The caption reads something like, "So much to do, so little time to do it!" That's Angus McKie; writer, artist, graphic designer, animator, publisher, printer, the list goes on. Hundred-hour weeks in the home studio he shares with his partner, Judith Tomlinson, aren't that rare.

His latest project is the colouring of Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons' follow-up to Give Me Liberty, Martha Washington Goes To War. When I arrived for this interview, there were two computers running, both showing scenes in progress from Martha Washington. "In the short term, Martha Washington came about because Dave couldn't get a satisfactory arrangement in the States for colouring it up on the computer, and in the longer term, it came about because we've always kept in touch generally about what is going on. I spoke with Dave often about the time I started working on The Blue Lily (Angus' recently cancelled title from Dark Horse Comics). He gave me a lot of information on setting up The Blue Lily and ever since then, we've been keeping in touch and obviously observing the developing computer graphics scene. I met Dave at the Apple Expo Show. We looked at what was happening there and I had some samples of computer colouring with me. When The Blue Lily was

cancelled, Dave rang me and asked if I'd be interested in colouring Martha Washington. Fortunately, it was at a time when I was wondering what to do next."

The phone rings. It's Dave Gibbons. I become eavesdropper on a conversation about proofs for Martha Washington; colour intensity, process colour, colour gamut, Richard Corben, colour mixes, and optical discs, and it occurs to me that now, with the aid of modern technology, the comic artist can certainly have more say and control over the colouring of his work than previously, when someone would put colour notes on a photostat and then send them off to guide the colouring which was carried out by anonymous factory workers. "We communicate a lot by phone and fax. We can look at the same screen image and compare notes. If we work together in the future, we'll be able to have live electronic links. We've adjusted colours before just by using numbers. It's a bit like painting by numbers. You can define everything in terms of numbers and it's very useful in communicating over a distance."

There is a depth to the colouring of Martha Washington that goes beyond what has been seen on other computer-coloured books. Using the computer, Angus has painted, airbrushed and added modelling to Gibbons' work, but not at the expense of the drawings. "One of the things that has impressed me most about working with Dave, is just how quickly he produces the artwork. He keeps up the standard and he does it



WAR



software, you need to have a bit of an idea about colour and paint too. There are a lot of people who can do one or the other, but less who can do both. You need an interest in art as well as an interest in technology, and in the society in which we live, there is often a gulf between the two. You need a certain frame of mind to be able to use computers. When everything is running okay, you can get by without an in-depth knowledge, but sooner or later you are going to come to a problem. Then you need a very persistent and obsessive frame of mind. You need to be able to take something apart, step by step. These aren't the qualities that you usually need to paint a picture."

"I worked out on my own the method I am using. On a computer, software divides up into draw and paint programs. I think a lot of people had already started colouring comics using specially written draw software. For me, paint programs are a better way to go. A year ago the amount of power that they demanded was much more

expensive than it is now and much less available. With the falling prices of memory and the ramping up of chip speeds, it means that being able to access every pixel on an A4 image is now more practical. The software I used was off the shelf, mass market software. It could probably do a lot of what the specially-written software could do, but not all of it. Off the shelf stuff has been developing and is getting so sophisticated now. Because the mass market hardware is getting so sophisticated and powerful, the software has become more sophisticated and powerful. It can now do just as much as special software, if not more." "In draw programs it is possible to create pre-set blends and it may be a temptation to use them if you already have them, and you know how they print. An accurate prediction of what a thing on the screen will look like when its printed is always a big problem in computer graphics. There

are lots of ways a paint program can be controlled to give you that preview more accurately than a draw program.

If you can solve the technical problems, then it liberates you creatively. Computer technology offers tremendous potential for the graphics scene, but in order to realise that potential one needs to have enthusiasm for, and some basic conventional skills in drawing and painting."

"I think if Martha Washington goes off well, and we don't encounter too many problems, it might open doors to other things whereby we start using the computer to generate images rather than just to colour images in. It's a very powerful way of working. All that is required is a need and an imagination to make the computer do what is wanted. If you don't have that imagination or need, then you won't get it out of the computer. If you don't put it in, you won't get it out."

DAVE WEIR

MONKEY

ART

I've had a cold for the past couple of days, and my nose is running. I was feeling under the weather, persevering with the odd snuffle, declining a storming rain shower and the odd sneezing down the memory lane together, where he revealed the profession he'd originally aspired to. "Early on I had wanted to be a paleontologist, and why? Because I thought all they did was draw dinosaurs all day. We might have laughed, but one day some pop-psychologist's going to end up writing a book on me exactly it is that I had a passion for the boy with a fascination for the extinct reptiles to eventually embark upon a career in the comic book business. But as I was an artist, I had to do all the other things that continued to nag why he and I never looked

towards working in the building trade. "It's dirty and stuff."

They grew from about the age of thirteen, and I wanted to do comics. When *Microbots* first came out drawn by Mike Golden, I felt that it was the greatest thing I had ever seen and that's the one that really made me decide. I had always said I was going to be a

drawing superheroes, but I had never thought I'd seriously about doing it, but I said that, and thought, yes, that's the sort of thing I want to do."

Through the haze of his congested mind we tried to piece together the story that gave him his first comic book. "Well, in fact, I was initially fired by Marvel in 1983, my first job was

Longshot which Ann Nocenti made up. And I had drawn the first half, when Pacific phoned up and asked if I would be interested in doing some work for them." Amusingly there were a few readers complaining he was often to sign his name like his surname, Mike Neal's, when if anything was stylistically similar it was Golden's style. "I think the first thing I actually had published was a cover for *Marvel Fan Club* #13."

"I was before working on *Longshot* and I was in the office, the my editors were all sitting around with me," he said, "I think I spent 8 months drawing that first issue."

The years have been filled with rumours of his returning to work on *Longshot*, initially as a comic novel, at one time 10 pages long, and then just a collection of tales. "I was all over the place, I was all over the place," he explained, "I somehow managed to keep putting it off until it just didn't

GOING AROUND

ADAMS TALKS ABOUT HIS NEW SERIES TO PAUL H. BIRCH

happen. Then Ann and I were going to do another *Longshot* series and that didn't happen either."

One perceives, not too difficult, that it still takes Mr. Adams a not inconsiderable amount of time to complete a piece of work.

"I'm pretty fast now if I have to be, like if I have a deadline. But I'm constantly being held back." This sounded serious. How so, Art? "By my amazing ability for laziness!" he laughed.

A man who doesn't make excuses - how refreshing! The usual route an artist takes is to slog away almost anonymously on a series before fans, and one's creative peer group, start taking you seriously. It's not been the Art Adams way.

"I've never actually been on a series at all. *Longshot* was a mini-series, and everything else I've done since has been specials of some sort." Books he's been involved with include *The Fantastic Four*, *The X-Men*, *Godzilla*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and the delightfully quirky *Gumby's Winter Fun Special*. "I've always wanted to do a regular series," he continued, "But it's just that I always had jobs lined up so far in advance, and I liked those jobs so much that I didn't want to drop them when I had opportunities to do regular series. I had to pass them over."

"As a kid I always wanted to do a regular series and now that I'm working on *Monkeyman* I can foresee nothing but this for quite a while. In fact when I was doing various specials I found it difficult to start up on something completely different from what I had before. But I enjoyed doing them all the same."

It was Adams' suggestion that Mike Mignola create his own character, which became *Hellboy*, and so led to their own creative involvement with

the Legend imprint, currently happily housed at Dark Horse.

"Erik Larsen, shortly after Image had started up, was nice enough to call me up and ask if I was interested in doing anything for them, or if I had any ideas for any characters. And I didn't think I had." He said in surprise

almost to himself as way of explaining his

own series' genesis.

"I had been working at Marvel comics, along with other comic companies for almost ten years and I had never made up anything! Even *Longshot* was Ann Nocenti's idea where I just designed what he looked like, so I didn't think I could come up with anything of my own, but about a half hour after I'd talked to Erik I had made up *Monkeyman* and *O'Brien* - in fact I had made up a talking gorilla and a

strong woman - then I realised I had accidentally made up *Angel and Ape*, and I thought, 'Hold on, wait a minute!'

The visual similarities are apparent, despite being hardly conclusive storywise, and he claimed his youth was not spent devouring '60s DC

raved enthusiastically, continuing to explain yet another story few British readers will see first hand. "They recently printed my second 4 page effort for March in *The Dark Horse Insider* which is called 'Trapped in the Lair of the Shrewmanoid'. Let's hope the various short stories he's worked

comics.

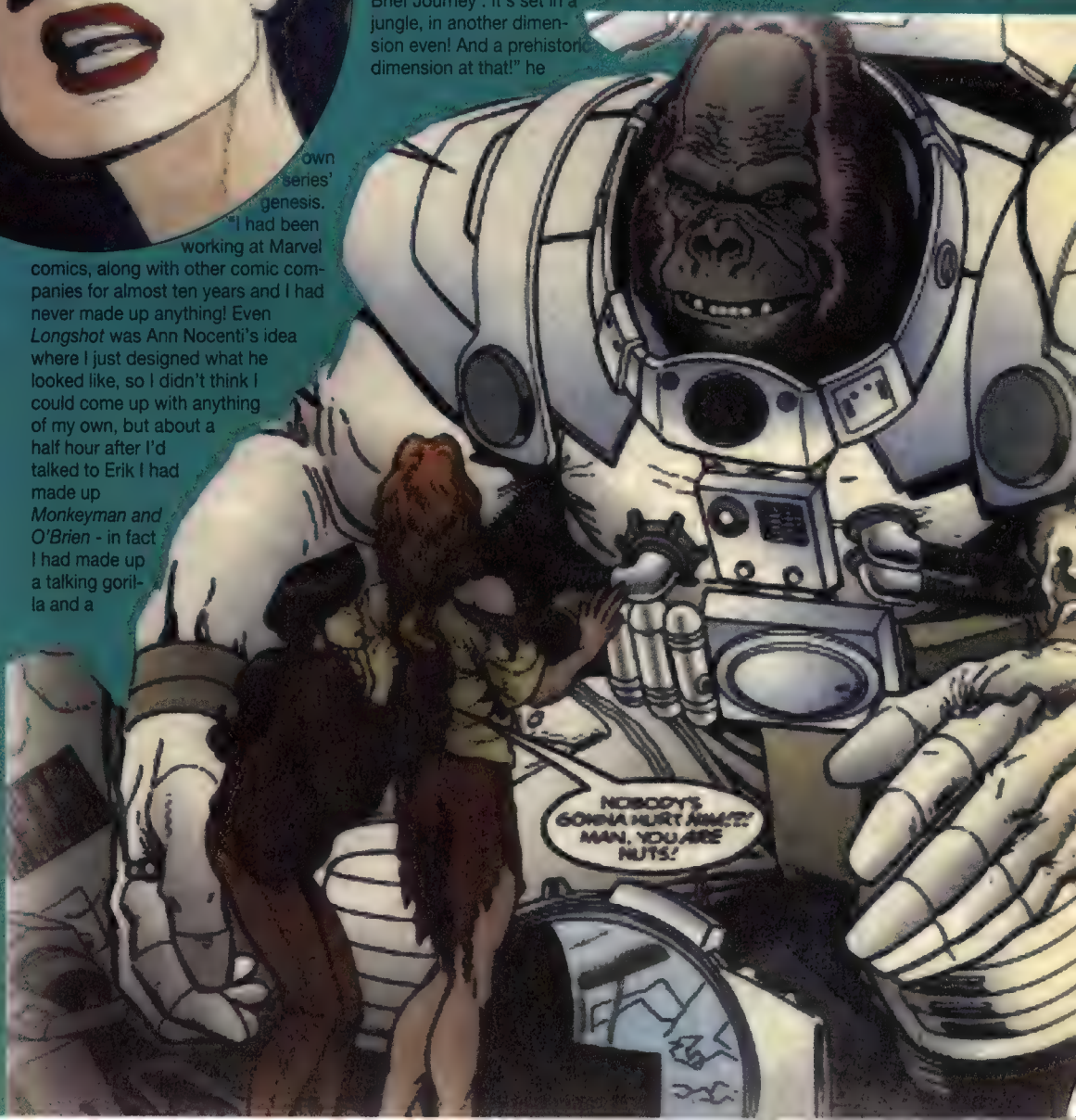
"I never had that much interest in DC Comics - there were things I was interested in, but they were less so to me than Marvel which I grew up with. I found them to be drawn in a less interesting way."

Monkeyman and *O'Brien* made their debut in a black and white Dark Horse anthology comic given away at the 1993 San Diego convention.

"It was 'The Shocking Case of Brief Journey'. It's set in a jungle, in another dimension even! And a prehistoric dimension at that!" he

on are collected under a single cover one day.

The general reader's initial confrontation with *Monkeyman* and *O'Brien* was the self-contained 'Tortorus' story in *Dark Horse Presents* #80. Perusing it we are presented with both lead characters, and their ongoing activities, as if they pre-exist in our minds. It works for that particular strip, with answers for how Axlwell Tiberius - the *Monkeyman* of





the title - had come to earth from space, and how Ann Darrow O'Brien had gained her amazing strength tentatively promised to be explained to some satisfaction in the back-up series currently featured in *Hellboy*. But the most telling mystery concerns Ann's father: Was Professor O'Brien dead? "Er, we don't know! He's gone some where, but where we don't know! There's a machine - a dimensional exploration device - that he was working on that afternoon in his basement, they came downstairs into the basement and the machine was on and he was gone - He's gone!" You tell Art Adams that he's either giving absolutely nothing away, or hasn't yet worked out this minor detail and all he'll give you back in return is a fiendish chortle.

"The plans I have for the first four issues are all self-contained stories. The way I'm working right now, I'll draw four, they'll publish four, I'll draw four, they'll publish four - which does not make it a mini-series it's just that it will have breaks..." his voice wondered quietly down some slip road seeking to escape but then thought better of it, uttering "Because of my slowness."

"But the first four issues are all self-contained stories. The second four may be 2 part stories, and I'm supposed to, in the not too distant future, be writing Mike Mignola's next *Hellboy* mini-series - *Hellboy Vs. Mecha-King Hellboy*."

Originally it was stated that each creator would run their characters as back-up strips in the other's book on a rotating quarterly basis, but there have since been some minor amendments.

"That's going to be the case for the first two groups of four, but after that we will probably not be in each other's books on a regular basis at all, although I have plans for *Hellboy* to cross over into my book, and Mike

has ideas for a little bit of Monkeyman stuff crossing over into his book. I think we'll each be drawing those books ourselves, and I don't think we'll be sharing too much more in the future. Which is too bad because I'd like to do that but he is working so much faster than he's leaving me far behind.

"That was intended to be the case," he said concerning John Byrne's *Danger Unlimited* characters crossing into the books, "But I think it's going to be pretty much the same way as the early Marvel Universe where there'd be someone like Iron Man but he never really mentioned anyone else although they're intended to be in the same universe. They may show up in each other's books eventually but the way John has designed his book, his characters are in the part, some time before Mike's and mine take place, and then his second series will have them way off in the future, so it's unlikely they'll meet any time

soon." However, since we spoke, word has it that *Danger Unlimited* didn't achieve the kind of sales Byrne was looking for, and he's put the series on the backburner with the heat turned down low.

Adams hopes to be around for some time with his own title, to which he's added scripting duties alongside the artwork. "I did co-write with Randy Stradler on my *Godzilla* comic of a few years ago, but I chickened out on that one. But this one is all mine." You tell him he must be pretty content with the way it's turning out if he's also due to dialogue *Hellboy* and all he'll do is laugh between coughs.

"Mike seems to be happy with what I'm doing. I keep telling him he

should be writing his own stuff, he's a very smart and funny guy, but he's just chicken - he ought to write his own book! I keep balling him and trying to get him to, but we'll just have to wait and see. But I'm having fun writing the stuff so far.

"I think I'm having fun writing because it's harder for me than drawing so I find it more challenging, and I hope some time I'll be kind of good at it."

Only being able to base it on the 'Tortorus' strip at the time it came across as a fun piece. "Well, that's my plan for the entire series. I don't expect it to be full of any heavy messages...or of any importance whatsoever!" he joked. "I just want it to be entertainment."

"For quite a while I avoided the books I thought were needlessly grim, and those that I actually found offensive such as Marvel comics' *The Punisher*, and every other character that's based on him. I don't at all like superheroes who kill people. I don't think that makes them superheroes, I don't think that that makes them heroes at all."

I'll go along with the analogy so far - superheroes, in the main, are intended as escapist fantasy thus the current trend for blood counts to numerous to mention seems needlessly exploitive, and actually a detriment to solid storytelling to me. But heroes, in real world terms, are another matter entirely, and even harder to define than our current fictional types.

"Oh, I have ideas for at least 30 issues!" Adams sponsors when probed about future plans. "As a kid, I read in something like *Famous Monsters* that Willis O'Brien had wanted to do a movie called King Kong Vs. Prometheus, which then became Vs.

Frankenstein, and eventually became King Kong Vs. *Godzilla* so I have a plan for Monkeyman and

O'Brien to go off somewhere and find some guy building a Frankenstein monster. I'm going to be doing it as a four part story." It doesn't stop there however,

"Another thing I read when I was a kid, was that, King Kong was originally supposed to have been a baboon, so my King Kong will be a giant baboon!"

Although his excitement over *Monkeyman* and O'Brien is readily apparent, there's also a nagging reluctance at the back of his mind that he can't work on several books at the same time.

"It's unfortunate that I have ideas for a couple of other things. I'd like to do another *Godzilla* project, I had a lot of fun doing that last one and I'd like to do another, I have ideas for at least 2 different *Godzilla* stories. It may be possible that I could just write those or write and just lay them out, but that's really not much fun for me - I want to get to draw them too! Hopefully as I get more used to doing all my own stuff I'll start to pick up a little speed."

The only other side project he's still committed to completing is inking pictures by the late Jack Kirby for Pure Imagination's *Jack Kirby's Heroes and Villains*?

"I have Ka-Zar and Zabu which is a real nice one, the Thing fishing, and Spider-Man with Superman. I wish someone would bother me to get them done because I need someone to bother me."

I suggest to Art Adams he needs a good kick up the backside.

"Oh yes!" he replies. When asked whether his long time girlfriend Grace Tanaka - who he mentions "one of the characters in *Monkeyman* is based on," - is any good at helping out in that area he laughs back, "She could work a little harder."



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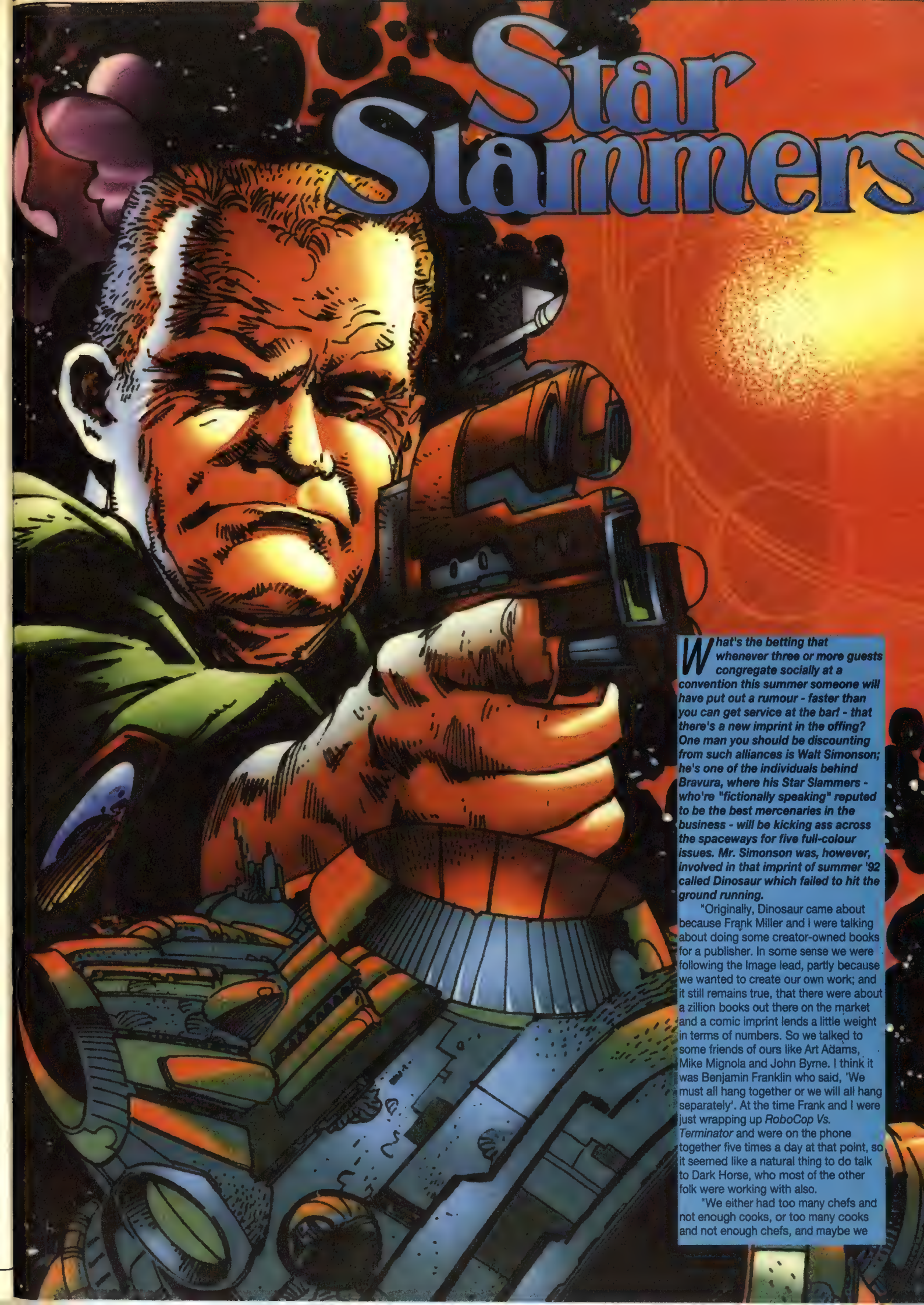
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Star Slammers

What's the betting that whenever three or more guests congregate socially at a convention this summer someone will have put out a rumour - faster than you can get service at the bar! - that there's a new imprint in the offing? One man you should be discounting from such alliances is Walt Simonson; he's one of the individuals behind *Bravura*, where his *Star Slammers* - who're "fictionally speaking" reputed to be the best mercenaries in the business - will be kicking ass across the spaceways for five full-colour issues. Mr. Simonson was, however, involved in that imprint of summer '92 called *Dinosaur* which failed to hit the ground running.

"Originally, *Dinosaur* came about because Frank Miller and I were talking about doing some creator-owned books for a publisher. In some sense we were following the Image lead, partly because we wanted to create our own work; and it still remains true, that there were about a zillion books out there on the market and a comic imprint lends a little weight in terms of numbers. So we talked to some friends of ours like Art Adams, Mike Mignola and John Byrne. I think it was Benjamin Franklin who said, 'We must all hang together or we will all hang separately'. At the time Frank and I were just wrapping up *RoboCop Vs. Terminator* and were on the phone together five times a day at that point, so it seemed like a natural thing to do talk to Dark Horse, who most of the other folk were working with also.

"We either had too many chefs and not enough cooks, or too many cooks and not enough chefs, and maybe we

thought it would happen by itself, but it just didn't click. If only we had some good sound-bite material about major confrontations or long-drawn out mud-wrestling battles between us, like (say) with Frank and I," he says, laughing, "but none of that happened. We just didn't pursue it ruthlessly enough on our own, so nothing developed out of it.

"In a sense, the guys in Legend are most of the Dinosaur group with the exception of people like Weezie (Walt's wife, writer Louise Simonson), Chris Claremont and myself, but with the addition of Paul Chadwick. It was really funny because once Jurassic Park came out the name Dinosaur took on a whole lot of connotations that we had not intended. In some ways maybe it was a good thing we didn't end up using that name, but at the time it had the proper rebellious side to it that we enjoyed. I'm sorry we didn't use that name, but it's OK.

"I had been planning on doing *Star Slammers* for Dinosaur anyhow, so I decided last spring I would shop it around and see what the options were. I ended up talking to Dave Olbrich amongst other people, and Malibu were offering what I thought was the best deal.

"As it turned out, at the time I was doing this, a number of other creators were also talking to Malibu about the possibility of publishing their creator-owned material, and that was a happy accident! Somewhere along the way we reached critical mass where there was enough of us talking to each other that we thought the imprint idea was worth a try. We talked to Dave and he was game to do it. Actually the hardest part about doing it was trying to find a name, because more names are taken than you could believe - it's unreal! But we put together the Bravura imprint with Malibu and it's gone on from there.

"I guess I just felt it was time," he says of his return to creator-owned



material. "It wasn't none of this 'I saw the light!' business.

"I did work-for-hire for many years and had a great time working on the characters I did, but we have reached a time where because there is so much marketing of the material it has become a really ferocious place and on the work-for-hire end of it, as a creator, it really is the Reagan trickle-down theory of economics: stuff does eventually trickle down to you some time.

"I'm sure one of the things that impelled the Image guys to split from Marvel and form their own group was the fact that when those guys were radioactively hot I couldn't pick up a comic book where I didn't see new T-shirts

advertised all with artwork from their panels, and although they might have been getting a quick handshake and a Thankyou very much for drawing all this, and they might have been getting some money but it would have been relatively small. Also, I will say in my own experience, the money you get doesn't exactly come through; especially when you're hot like that you see an awful lot of your stuff showing up in places you have very little control over. When I was doing *Thor* I saw a T-shirt they had picked up from a splash page of mine where Thor had his hammer raised over his head, except that in the splash it was a cropped figure cut off at mid-calf and he wasn't wearing a cape because he was inside for the scene; and somebody either at Marvel or at the T-shirt printing company had finished off the drawing

and it was ghastly! And in this circumstance that doesn't have to happen. If your work does come out in other venues you have complete control over it. Which, speaking artistically, is a much better way to be.

"That doesn't mean I'm sworn off work-for-hire forever. In fact, after the *Slammers* is over, I think the first thing I'm going to do is a story with the Ultraverse's Freex characters. That would be something like 3 or 4 short chapters making up one large story. After doing the designs for Malibu I thought it would be fun to go back and draw those guys, and I would love to get Weezie to write it. But in the long run, it does seem that as an investment of your time, if you can do it, creator-owned stuff is probably a better way to go."

THE PAST

Star Slammers first saw professional publication as a Marvel graphic novel, but it's been around a lot longer than that; indeed, the original stripzine - or small press comic if you prefer - came out over a period of two years and was part of Simonson's CV into the major leagues.

"It was a matter of lucky timing actually. As an undergraduate I was an illustration major, and the teacher, Thomas Sgourof, gave out projects to do every two or three weeks, but he also gave a two-semester project where you really worked on something lengthier; at the same time I was a member of a major science fiction fan club in Washington D.C. called the W.S.F.A. (Washington Science Fiction Association) who were bidding to hold the Science Fiction World Con in 1974 which meant that the voting for the venue was done two years earlier. I understand it's 3 years in advance now because conventions are so big it takes you that long to prepare. And I did several chapters of this little *Star Slammers* comic book as part of the W.S.F.A.'s promotion and after talking to my teacher I was able to make that into my junior project, then later I was also able to make it part of my senior degree project."

After some experimentation, he was writing, drawing and lettering a 6-page *Star Slammers* strip with covers which came out every 3-4 months. "This little black & white publication was made on an offset press in Jay Haldeman's basement by him, his wife and whatever friends were around. Science Fiction fans go to a lot of conventions so club members would grab a mitt of these things and drop them on the convention's freebie table to promote us holding the World Con.

"The earlier work in it is not professional; the later work pretty much is. I took about half of the last work, pasted it down into a large hardcover volume to become part of my senior thesis with which I graduated in May '72. When I went to New York in August looking for work I brought out *Star Slammers* as my portfolio - and it worked!"

Taking place a thousand years after the graphic novel, the *Bravura* series focuses on Rojas, the first *Slammer* ever to be captured. Reputed to be a seasoned warrior, could this be some

autobiographical metaphor for Simonson's relationship with the comic book industry. Long and hearty laughter was the initial response, after which he answers, "Until this moment it's never crossed my mind." It transpires the character of Rojas was created in 1978-79 for a story that nearly appeared in *Heavy Metal*, Capital City distributor's *Advance Comics* having recently run some of the unfinished pages. However, time has a way of catching up on you, even if only in an unassuming manner.

"Rojas being a guy of around 50, which is not too far off from my own age, it's possible that it's not entirely accidental. But it's not like I want to do a guy my own age, I still do guys younger than I am now. I think there are sympathetic vibrations between me and the character as a result of my being as old as I am now, rather than say having done the character 12-13 years ago, but if you want to read more into it, I'd love to read the analysis!"

The intervening years have, likewise, links with the past as much as the present in terms of his approach to the visual work.

"In some ways the breakdowns I'm doing harken back to the graphic novel, particularly in the early stages where I'm dealing with a lot of *Star Slammers*. The first issue goes from dealing with a massive movement of troops with lots of *Star Slammers* where it's cut quickly with an almost MTV approach to the end of the story where we focus the whole thing down to just a couple of characters. There are more characters in the story, but it goes from a very broad to a very tight focus. When a lot of *Slammers* are around it does lend itself to certain graphic conclusions; like multiple heads to suggest their telepathic communications, through to the sheer numbers of them - there's stuff like that which is similar. Twelve years down the line I think I draw a little better, and at the same time there's a technical difference. Back in '82-83 Xerox machines were not always of reproduction quality, but now pretty much every artist I know has a Xerox machine in the house and as a result, particularly around the middle of #1, there's a sequence of events involving a main character who's a very powerful but very young telepath who is helping guard the captured Rojas on his journey back to the empire's headquarters; the kid is an avid video game player - if anything, this part might be a little autobiographical. I'm not as berserk, but I've been known to play a few video games in my life. But in order to graphically suggest what I want to about the kind of games he plays and how he uses the material I've essentially been able to use a Xerox machine to repeat panels and patterns in ways I simply couldn't have done 12 years ago. So something as technologically simple, relatively speaking, as a Xerox machine is making a difference to the way storytelling is done. When Frank and I were doing

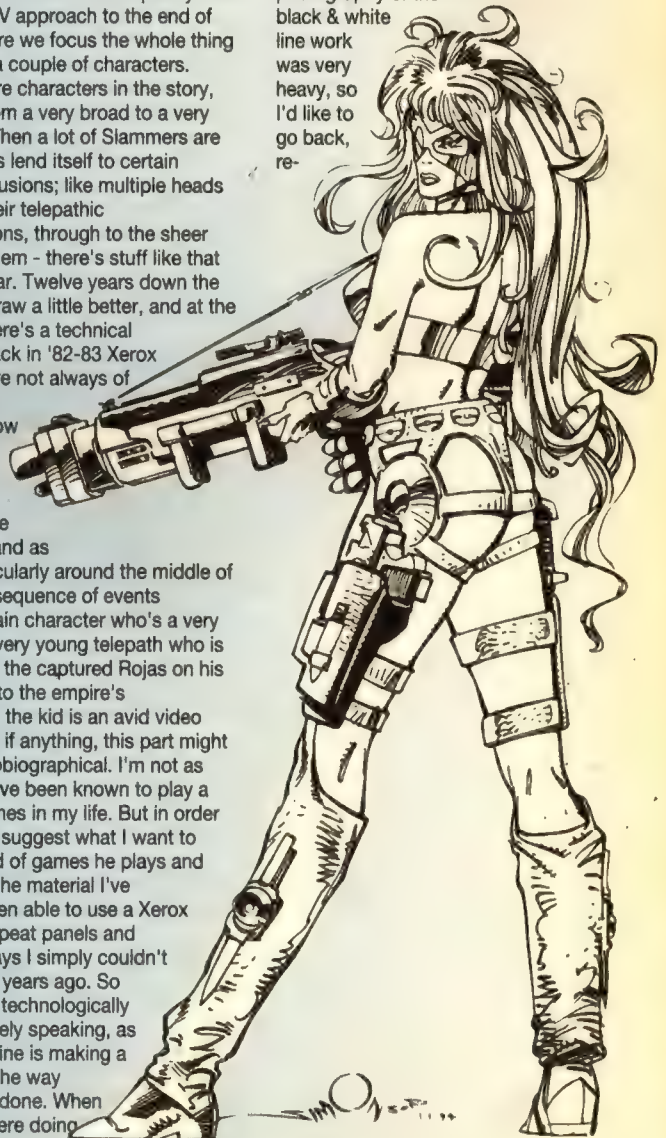
RoboCop Vs. Terminator it hopped around in possible times or futures, and I did some xerography there in order to create this feeling of moving back and forth in time. Having developed this tool a lot more confidently I am now using it in different ways to that book and different ways to the way I'd have approached it with the graphic novel.

"My feeling is that anything's fair game for artists as long as you can reproduce it," he said of the use of computer generated art. "I know John Byrne, for instance, uses computers to help generate backgrounds of various sorts and pattern type stuff, so it wouldn't surprise me if another 12 years down the line I'll be using different tools besides pen and ink. But right now, apart from using it as a way of accessing a number of fonts or some kinds of effects I don't think I'll really be using it in the course of the strip. But it'd be fun!"

"One of things about the graphics, having done *Cyberforce #0* for Marc Silvestri, I am also using somewhat larger pictures than I did in the graphic novel. It isn't a pin-up comic but I am trying to use larger images in the current graphic idiom, if you will, and that has affected the way the book looks too."

It has been suggested that *Bravura* will reprint the graphic novel, but Simonson said this was indefinite as yet.

"On the original one, the photography of the black & white line work was very heavy, so I'd like to go back, re-





Star Slammers© Walt Simonson

shoot it, clean it up and actually print it a little more closely to what the work actually looks like if it happens. It's probably something only me and about five other guys in America would notice, but it would be nice for me if I could. Actually if anyone's interested, I might consider putting out an ashcan of the original 50-page story. It'd be fun. It isn't work I'd be embarrassed to see in print, but it is something that would have to come out as," he pauses briefly before dropping his voice in semi-mock seriousness, "an historical document."

Star Slammers is obviously something he holds dear to his heart, but science fiction doesn't automatically spring to mind as a vast money spinner in the US comics market.

"Certainly it's true that the bulk of the market over here is superheroes," he remarks, "but what's funny is, if you look at a lot of the stuff from the creator-owned lines that both Legend and Bravura are doing, some of it could be called superhero only by the most generous definition, and actually given the nature of the business deals, the contracts that we're able to put together with companies like Malibu and Dark Horse, you don't have to sell as many copies in order for both you and the company to make a few bucks so we're not looking at 300,000 to break even, and that might give us compensation for not putting out superhero books. How that will work out in the long run is anybody's guess of course."

Offering the suggestion of European translations where science fiction comics hold more credence than superheroes, his reply bellowed in my ears.

"I'm looking for all of it! It's so great to see your characters talking in foreign tongues. When I did *Alien* for *Heavy Metal* there were editions from countries like Japan, Germany and Spain; even the *Star Slammers* graphic novel had German and Spanish editions. I think it would be great to see it printed over in Europe and even elsewhere, but I'm not

counting on that if it never happens, and if Malibu sells enough copies over here I won't have to do that to make a living." But it's a more than welcome bonus.

THE FUTURE

"Right now I don't know that I would jump into another *Star Slammers* story instantly," he says of future plans, "but I have to say that I'm getting some nice early feedback on stuff, so I'm more optimistic than I might have been a while ago on how things are going - especially since the past six months have been a little rough on comic sales over here. My problem is that I have another three creator owned projects I would like to do - one involves a horror story background, one a folk tale, and the other a sort of dream fantasy - and of course I can't do them all at the same time! If the *Slammers* does well..." He ponders. "I might just go ahead and do more *Slammers* while I'm cooking."

"I'm doing the Heatwave drawing for Marc's source book of Cyberforce characters and I'll probably do a couple of trading cards for him, and we've actually talked about me writing something for them. They're putting together a package for me about what they're interested in having done. But at the moment we're just in the talking stages."

Alongside *Star Slammers* out now from Marvel should be *Iron Man 2020*.

"It's a project that was begun four years ago. Originally it was supposed to be a graphic novel, but they don't publish graphic novels any more," he jokes. "And we came up before the Marvel 2099 universe got under way, otherwise we would probably have made it Iron Man 2099. It's a one-off story based on the character from the *Machine Man* series that Tom, Herb and Barry did, although it

isn't necessary to have read the earlier material. That was fun to do. Bob Wiacek's the artist and the pages look great; he's done an awfully nice job on it."

Nearing our conclusion I told the creator how much I'd appreciated and enjoyed, both the research and actual story he'd put together for *The Mighty Thor* #355, which Sal Buscema got to draw.

"That was the one about the Great grandfather." Yeah, Tiwaz, debatedly the original sky father worshipped by Indo-European races. "I have to say that was one of my favourite issues too. That comic book was the first comic book in space." Now there's an ironic surprise. "It was sent by the Young Astronauts, which I believe is a young group of kids, and it went up on the one six months before the Challenger disaster. I don't know if any other comics went up but eventually Marvel got a plaque to hang on their wall commemorating it. Maybe other stuff got up with astronauts sneaking up copies of Archie or something to read in their off duty times," he laughs. "But that was official. Isn't that cool?" Being sandwiched between both sides of the age barrier where the expression cool trips easily off the tongue I affirmed it to be so using my own peculiar colloquialism, then left the final words to Walt Simonson himself:

"Buy *Superman: The Man of Steel* - a great comic book written by my wife. I figure if I can't get a family plug in what the hell am I doing?"

Paul H Birch



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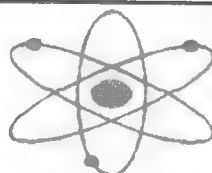
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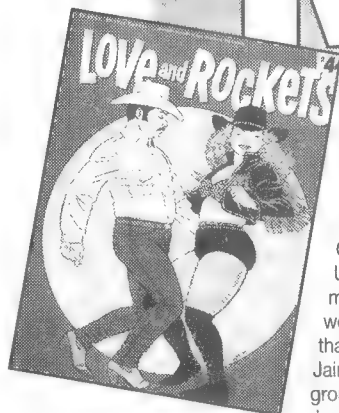
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Reviews



Three anthologies to kick us off. **Love And Rockets 44** (Fantagraphics, \$2.95), a typically fine issue, offers contrast in its pair of strips. The story on Gilbert Hernandez' 'A Trick Of The Unconscious' drifts on flourishes of magic and surreal symbolism, given weight by a loose, clear art style that's rooted in the earth. His brother Jaime's 'It's Not That Big A Deal' flips ground and sky, with a minutely observed night time excursion given wings by crisp, glamorous graphics.

Twisted Sisters Comics 1 (Kitchen Sink, \$3.50) is more gentle than its title suggests. Unusually for comics,

concepts such as character merchandising, which demand consistency. Competition between titles requires publishers to suggest constant change in their characters, but other loyalties demand stability. A hero will undergo drastic metamorphosis, including the ultimate transformation of death, only to run back to the caress of his or her core self. In order to be commercial, the comic hero takes much from a lifetime of lessons, but forgets all.

The brand names that surround us under the guise of entertainment are so often soulless. **Street Fighter II 2** (Tokuma Comics, \$2.95), a translated manga, attempts to match the fury of



the four creators on display are all women - no reason why it shouldn't be so, no reason why it should be. What's important here is the warmth and intelligence that comes across. My favourites were Mary Fleener's surfer symphony, with art history meeting pop culture head on, and Carol Tyler's whimsical, poetic misadventures, reminiscent of Eddie Campbell's work (just to get his mention for this month out of the way).

With excellent packaging and comic shop distribution, **Scenes From The Inside** (Drat 'N' Blast, £2.75) blurs the distinction between small press and the other stuff that, sometimes tongue-in-cheek, we label 'professional' - hence this third issue's presence in this column and its sibling over there. A varied, inscrutable bundle of short pieces, *Scenes* questions the nature of reality; is what we imagine any less true than what we can touch? You can lose yourself in some strips; others may just lose you. I wish I knew why Simon Drug Cat is so funny. The strongest burn note is sounded by Luke Walsh's 'Asbestos Stiletto Of Time', which is too influenced by Richard Sala's work to become distinctive.

Other titles this month speak of history and change, and the memories in which they meet. In **Witchcraft** (DC/Vertigo, \$2.95), an ancient wrong echoes through time, with repercussions that none can foresee. With fresh unpredictability, *Witchcraft* demonstrates the strength of the limited series format. Stories are allowed to develop, and - more crucially - end, undisturbed by

video game battles with emotional intensity, fleshing out a collection of pixels. The fighters remain enigmas, their purpose becoming clear only when we are reminded of the times we projected ourselves into them as we attempted to perfect the Spinning Bird Kick.

When what we know about a character remains constant, all that can keep our interest is the presentation. The thoughtfulness of Ann Nocenti's mercurial, theatrical scripting in **Spectacular Spider-Man 213** (Marvel, \$1.50 for the standard edition: there's a more expensive bagged version around as well) couldn't contrast more greatly with the recent absurd capers in *Amazing Spider-Man*. Typhoid Mary is the eye of a storm of conflicting urges and ideologies; but does she truly threaten the status quo of Spider-Man's life? Will anything have changed after she has passed?

Familiarity can foster an empty contempt, but it can renew affection, as in the marvellous Pepe Le Pew back-up in **Looney Tunes 3** (DC, \$1.50). An amorous skunk, an unsuspecting black cat, a bakery with an icing machine; you know what's going to happen.

Now on its third installment, Marvel's

reissue of Lee and Kirby's X-Men work has been arriving on the shelves as the wake for Jack Kirby continues. The coincidence is unfortunate rather than deliberate: covers have to be drawn, and solicitations invited, months in advance. In the spirit of modern showbiz, **X-Men: The Early Years** (\$1.50) has a title rank with insincerity, capitalising on our sentiment for our heroes and their growing pains - Scott and Jean recast as Kevin and Winnie from *The Wonder Years*. For the media, nostalgia is a potent marketing device, with entire television channels and radio bands devoted to rekindling our memories. Such brazenly misty-eyed overtures to adult readers of comics are less common, perhaps because of the static nature of the characters. There is already a choice between the familiar in bright new arrangements or, in the case of Valiant, the new delivered in a traditional style. It's perhaps not surprising that a genuine nostalgia industry, in the form of reprinted material, hasn't attempted to break out of its small corner of the marketplace; but who wouldn't rather be reading the old *Fantastic Four* than the current one?

In one way or another, we're being sold our past, preserved on the page or in film; but times gone are not as, so often, they are presented to us. The past is made up unending change, of little decisions having unknowable and profound consequences. It was just another night out you could have stayed in with the new re-releases on *Top Of The Pops* just as easily. How were you to know that without a glance across a room at the right moment, eyes meeting as the band played on, you might not have today the one you love? Without a child's chance purchase to escape boredom, he might not have discovered Kirby's graphic power as the X-Men struggled to survive the Savage Land; and storytelling might not have been so vital to me as it is today.

Richard Hill

Review copies courtesy of Birmingham's Fantastic Store (Telephone 021-643 3667). Where prices quoted are in dollars, the sterling rate may vary slightly from shop to shop.



Small Press



who creates paintings by vaporising dinosaurs lured through a dimensional gap - or something like that! A cover by Steve Yeowell and D'Israeli wraps the package up nicely. It's an uncomplicated comic and I would like to see more please. The preview is available from David Moyes, 4 Johnston Park, Inverkeithing, Fife KY11 1BT for a measly 50p plus an SAE to fit a US size comic.

An explosion of colour and high quality printing burst at me from this month's postbag of small press comics. Of course, photocopied comics are every bit as valid as glossy colour ones and many creators out there aren't interested in or can't afford quality printing, but when it comes down to it, a profusion of professionally produced comics flooding this country can only have a positive effect on the industry.

Bonafide is first on the podium. There's a melee of techniques being used here, though the roots of each strip are firmly embedded in graffiti and street art. The artists have made good use of Duotone effects, computer graphics, airbrush, paints, dodgy felt tips and more. There are four strips in all, each with a futuristic theme - my only criticism is that this being the first issue, just as the characters start to grow on you, the strip finishes. That said, 'Doxie the Mutt in Ambience Land' is best, with Doxie being transported through some dodgy substance into an alternative universe, peopled by characters straight out of a Vaughan Bode world who need him as their champion. An old story perhaps, but presented very nicely thank you. Issue #0 from 23 Albany Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5LQ for £1.80 plus a comic sized SAE.

Brochure Uno has been produced with the intent of mimicking the gents pocket books at the turn of the century. It's certainly an odd mixture of cut-up images, semi-fictional band reviews, weird rats and a comic strip that features detectives, mutant lobster aliens posing as policemen and grisly murders. Glossy, heavy paper throughout lends it some grace, but I cannot help thinking that it doesn't quite gel as a whole. Worth a look though, from Niel Winstanley, 175A Camberwell Grove, London SE5 8JS, for £1.80 plus an A5 SAE.

Nervous Tales by Caspar Williams is a comic that is almost certainly destined for the big time. Imagine a cross between Jack Kirby and Daniel Clowes and you are well on your way. The stories cover strange alien possessions, a take on mass produced superhero comic

books and Love International, a bunch of groovy mod crimefighting kids who make the Scooby Doo gang look like amateurs. The style won't please all palates, but if you enjoyed Clowes' work on *Eightball*, you'll enjoy this. I predict great things for Caspar. This was issue two; #1 is still available from C. Williams, 15 Montpelier Road, Brighton BN1 2LQ. £1.60 for #1, £2.20 for #2 - and Titan/Diamond are carrying it, so get your local shop to stock it.

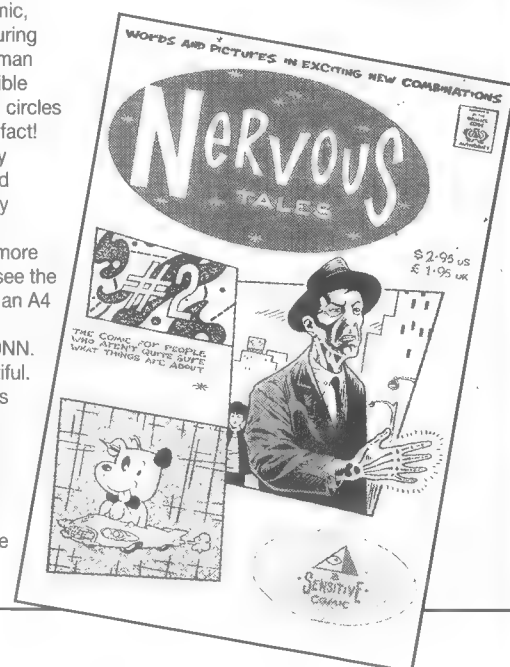
I didn't understand **Mauretania Comics** at all, but then I read another review of it and all was clear as crystal! Very little actually happens in the strips, but it evokes certain moods - you need to take your time with it, appreciate the artwork and the writing. It's an ambient comic. Having said that, 'Bob Brewers: Serial Killer' is plot based and I particularly like the cut-out Ingrid Pitt, Vampire Lovers lobby display. Chris Reynolds and Paul Harvey have done a pukka job on this; it redefines the boundaries of what a comic is supposed to be. It'll set you back £1.60 plus an A4 SAE, cheques payable to Paul Harvey, Flat 5, 20 Simonside Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle NE6 5JX.

Another new kid on the block is **Jack P Chill**, private investigator. As a direct contrast to the previous comic, this is story led, a nutty romp featuring serial killers, train spotters, a madman who wants women to put on sensible M&S knickers and flat shoes, corn circles and lots of blood. Lots and lots in fact! The art is individual and excellently rendered, fitting the characters and situations down to the ground. Roy Weatherley, the sick little puppy responsible for all this has plenty more stories in the pipeline. Help them see the light of day by sending £1.75 with an A4 SAE to 11 Thorntree Drive, West Monkseaton, Tyne & Wear NE25 9NN.

Andek, Girl Warhola is beautiful. This is just a preview, but it heralds great things to come. Christopher McLoughlin's art features delicate contrast between fine line art and solid blacks and David Moyes has conjured up a simple yet effective plot. Andek is an artist of the future

Scenes From the Inside is back with a third issue and proving itself to be one of the foremost compilations of British comics talent alongside the likes of *Le Roquet* and *Inkling*. I really don't know where to begin. There are four of my all time favourite strips in this issue: 'Pud & Pup', an achingly funny yet poignant tale of lab animals who are proud of their work; 'My Name Is Lydia', a well observed strip about a little brat; the last part of 'Skin Love' in which an acid trip leads to an excursion inside a woman's body; and 'Glue', reprinted from *Harpy* #2 by Nick Mackie, which as regular readers will know I have wet dreams over (*Harpy*, that is, not Nick - sorry). Everything about *Scenes* speaks quality. The *Scenes* crew will be running a stall in conjunction with Peter Pavement near the jazz stage at Glastonbury this year, but why wait till then? Get this essential compilation of the best of British cartooning from Titus Kodger at 5 Borough Road, Islesworth, Middx TW7 5DY, or 10 Harcourt Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 7RG. It'll set you back £2.75, but the cover is worth that alone. Stunning!

Steve Cook



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Cell Block H, 'Straightjacket Fits' revolved around the exploits of a crazy doctor and a Brit-Cit psycho-cube's weird inmates. "I sent some stuff up to *Revolver* and made an appointment with (editor) Peter Hogan, but the day I went in it was cancelled and Peter wasn't there; so Steve McManus asked me to develop some characters, which I did. I wrote a few sample scripts and he said that the characters were fine but we would rather have someone else write it." Fellow New Zealander and *Megazine* editor David Bishop was brought in. "It went from a gag strip to an on-going continuity thing as David didn't feel comfortable writing a gag strip. He would write a full script and I'd draw it, fiddle with the pacing and play around with the dialogue a bit. David was pretty helpful and was good about me changing things."

'Diabolical Liberty' is shortly due to run its course in *Deadline*. "It isn't really about anything. I'm allowed to run with whatever I want in *Deadline* - Frank Wynne is good to work with that way. He'll ask me to change things, but he'll tell me why." The story centres around Jack Shit, a.k.a. Satan, who gets stranded on Earth after Leggo the Cosmic Prankster tricks him into giving up being King of Hell. "The idea of using hell and the Devil is so that people can easily jump into the story and know the characters." Roger intends the strip to be the most commercially accessible thing he's done. No sequel is planned but Jack Shit and company turn up in 'Waiting For Godzilla' in *Zoot* #5. Roger doesn't go as far as to have his own universe but likes

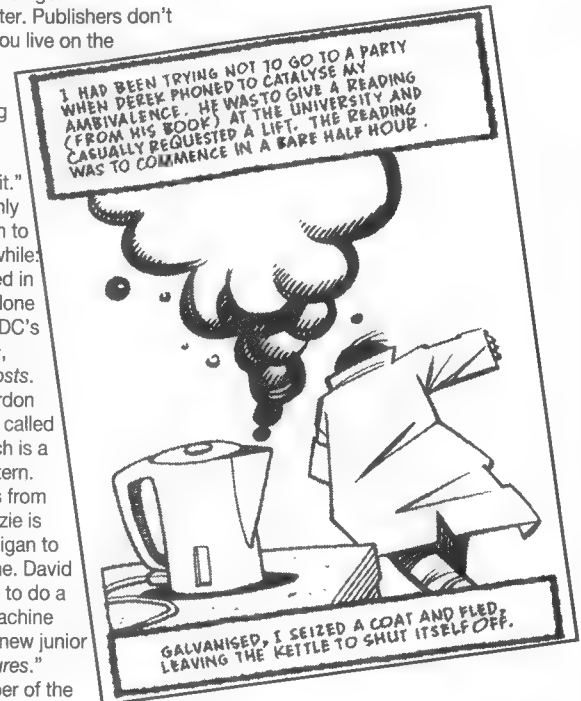
characters to play different roles in different stories.

Along with other New Zealand comic creator like Martin Emond, Dylan Horrocks or yours truly, Roger has found it necessary to move to London to further his comics career: "You can't make a living doing comics in New Zealand. You send stuff to people in the UK or the USA from New Zealand and chances are they're not going to answer you. Generally you don't even get the courtesy of a form letter. Publishers don't want to know you if you live on the other side of the world, so living in England and knocking on doors is the only way you're going to make a career out of it."

Roger has certainly got more than enough to keep him busy for a while: *Deadline* are interested in more work and he's done a few short strips for DC's *Big Books of Weirdos*, *Urban Myths* and *Ghosts*. "I'm working with Gordon Rennie on a proposal called *The Kabooki Kid* which is a sort of spaghetti western. I've had a few nibbles from 2000AD. Alan McKenzie is going to ask Pete Milligan to write something for me. David Bishop has asked me to do a sample for a Mean Machine one-page strip in the new junior *Judge Dredd Adventures*." Roger is also a member of the

ambitious Les Cartoonists Dangereux, whose work is showcased in the fine anthology *Le Roquet*.

Roger acknowledges that it isn't easy for someone with his 'cartoony' style to get work in the UK or US comic book industry but he's prepared to stoop as low as inking a Marvel comic. "What I'd really like to do is a comic which is read by a more general mainstream audience - and I don't mean comics."



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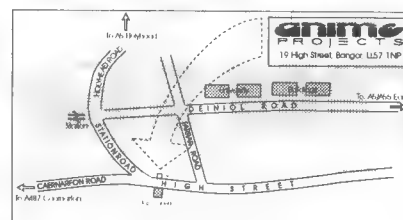
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SCENES/INSIDE

DIALOGUE from the inside

WE'VE ALREADY REVIEWED 'SCENES FROM THE INSIDE' AS THE MOST STARTLING SMALL PRESS PUBLICATION AVAILABLE IN THE U.K., RUNNING TO 64 PAGES OF BLACK AND WHITE ART AND A FULL-COLOUR COVER. TIME TO MEET TWO OF THE EDITORS.

TITUS KOJDER: There's four of us. There were six or seven of us initially but as you move along things get pared down and jobs become more clearly defined, so there are now four core editors: myself, Matthew, Steve (Tunn) and Dave (Leavesley). Three of them are in Bristol and I'm in London and we basically split all the different jobs between us. There's no assigned jobs yet - we all do a bit of everything, although Matthew does most of the DTP work because he's the most *au fait* with the computers.

MATTHEW BURTON: It worked out quite well; we were all at art college together and the beginnings of the comic were that Titus knew somebody who worked in a photocopy shop. The idea just spread around that four otherwise unemployed artists could do a comic.

We were all Fine artists and I don't know if that was a benefit

but we came to graphic design and designing magazines with a fresher outlook, maybe. We all stepped in with various ideas and we all do our own strips for the magazine, but we have group meetings to decide the look and feel of the magazine.

TITUS: We've already had a lot of unsolicited material sent in which is really exciting because the first issue was only 190 copies and didn't get out to too many people; it was a photocopied effort and looked it. Number two was printed and a whole lot better and people were coming out of the woodwork, people who are now published in *Deadline* and getting their own titles together, and some who have come from nowhere but their work is very

good.

MATTHEW: There's a relationship developing that we became aware of at the Glasgow convention, how we now act as a stepping stone for artists who are then filched, for want of a better word, by *Purr* and *Deadline*. But I

guess that's the way it's going to be because all we can promise our contributors is that they get exposure. **TITUS:** We've got a good deal with a printer who is doing us a lot of favours and giving us a lot of studio time, and we have another contact in Bristol who did the cover

for us for nothing, and we have other offers which could bring us greater exposure. We're talking to Titan about distribution, and if we can we want to raise the whole thing up a scale. We want to stay 'small press' but the problem with the small press is its disposability, the fact that everything is on duff photocopy paper, badly stapled and badly laid-out and just kind of thrown together. There are exceptions, but that seems to be the general rule.

STEVE: But isn't the attraction of the small press its amateur qualities - the fact that anyone can produce a comic without any training?

TITUS: There is that attraction, and there's a place for that, but when it's the rule I think it stops the small press being something you can take a step further, something that you can export.

MATTHEW: Thinking about the design of the whole magazine, I like to see a wide range of artwork. We don't want to create



an elite club of illustrators; we want a wide range of stories which we'll produce with high production values. The price problem with *Scenes* is that we have to hang in there until we get the wider audience. We're only printing a thousand at the moment so the cost is very high, but once we get past that barrier and print more the costs will come down and we'll all be a lot happier.

TITUS: We don't want to become an elitist preserve which small press magazines can become and one of the problems we've found is that it seems to be mainly middle-class white boys who have the time and lack of responsibility to spend their time drawing comics - a bit of a boys' club at times. We're trying to get

hybrid of music and comics, that indie feel they're trying to get - it's like selling street fashion back to the street. It's a bit contrived.

STEVE: Like regurgitating punk fashion. It was about being individual and suddenly everybody looked identical.

TITUS: I think we've got the energy to do something a little more interesting and more in tune with what people are actually doing rather than what some executive thinks people are doing.

MATTHEW: Another difference is that I for one am not a born and bred comic fan. We all grew up on comics, but I think we've been influenced by our art training and we take in a lot of influences from our environment, from tv, the Simpsons. All those influences mean we've created something

know about comics - we really do want to get new contributors.

STEVE: ...And there's lots of drugs.

MATTHEW: Another environmental influence!

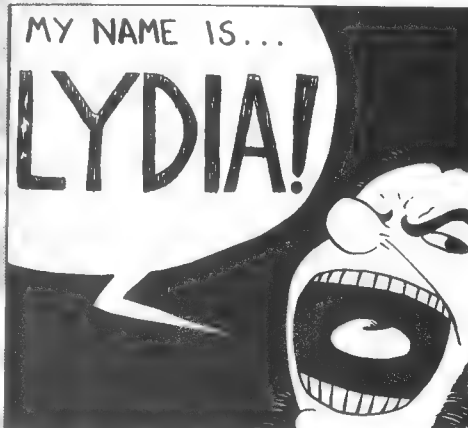
TITUS: But we don't want strips that are just people recounting their last trip. That's boring.

MATTHEW: We want to distance ourselves from that as much as we want to get away from superhero comics.

TITUS: We're going to have a stand at Glastonbury, a stall that is solely independent comics. Pete Pavement from Slab of Concrete is supplying a lot of

them, and we'll try to sell to the festival crowd. They're open to a lot of new ideas whether they're comic fans or not.

Going to Glasgow was a real eye-opener. We've started to meet a lot of people who have similar agendas. If there was any way of summing up what we want



Bleck! Tastes icky, doc

Medicine is always icky pud.

Glovestrane's busy run now, rabbit my love!

Stay alive I WILL find you!

to do with *Scenes* it's about being a flagship for a British comic scene. That's supposing quite a lot, but I think we have the capability to do it. We have a magazine that could get across to a lot of people. The next step is to approach people, approach distributors, get the advertising. It's about taking the game up a step.

as many contributors as possible because this isn't just a showcase for our group - we're not on that trip. It has to be accessible to as many people as possible.

MATTHEW: That would get us into places other than comic shops. We want to be stocked in places like art galleries and bookshops so that we really do become - and there's no way of saying this so it sounds unpretentious - a catalogue of visual art that goes beyond the basic definition of comics.

TITUS: What *Purr* has done is wonderful. It's hard bound, it looks lush and I guess for what you get £5 is quite good. But it seems to lack the soul of what the small press is all about. That

that's not a straightforward comic-genre magazine.

TITUS: Issue three was as close to a mainstream comic as we'll get. I want to see more strips that you have to really work for, some stuff that might not hook you immediately.

STEVE: There's a trip through somebody's womb. That's not immediately accessible...

MATTHEW: Er...that's one of mine.

STEVE: ...'Pud and Pup'...

MATTHEW: That's drawn by our only female contributor, Abi Stubbs. We've put a call in the editorial for more female artists. It's a great shame really that *Scenes* is still reflecting what people already



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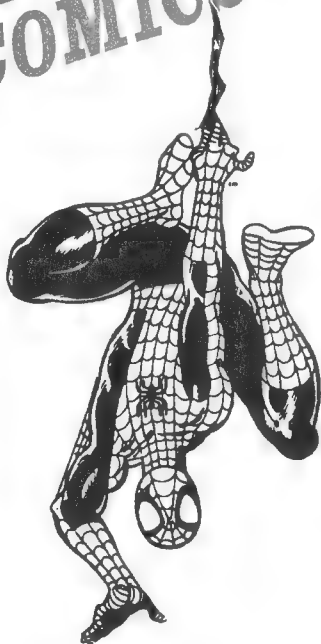
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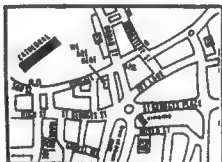
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BOOKS

Allen, Roger MacBride Isaac

Asimov's Caliban. Millenium, £4.99. Caliban is a robot created without the three laws created by Asimov in place, making him a suspect in a murder hunt when a young woman is battered to death.

(Asimov, Isaac) Asimov: The Unauthorised Life by Michael White. Millenium, £14.99 (hc).

Biography of the worlds best known SF author, covering the basics of his life and work. Most of this is available in Asimov's autobiographical writing and the 'Unauthorised' tag seems to be added because it speculates a little on his affairs over the years. Easy if unrevealing reading.

Attanasio, A.A. The Moon's Wife. New English Library. Paperback original.

Attanasio, A.A. Solis. New English Library, £16.99 (hc).

Banks, Iain Feersum Endjinn. Orbit, £15.99 (hc). Heerza funny story concernin the big playce from the time b4 the darknis, when sum of us wernt thort of (and sum ov us jus wernt thort very much of, but nuthin chainges). Aktule, tho, truth-betold, *muthc* chainges, and this are bein the stori of it. Er...

Brooks, Terry The Tangle Box.

Legend, £14.99 (hc). Brooks' first Magic Kingdom novel for six years sees Ben Holiday in more trouble than ever when Horris Kew and Bigger return at the behest of Gorse, a sorcerer of great evil who imprisons Ben in the Tangle Box.

Costello, Matthew J. seaQuest DSV:

Fire Below. Millenium, £4.99. Second in a series of seaQuest novelisations mixing underwater terrorism and the discovery of a new species of sea worm.

Furey, Maggie Aurian: The

Artefacts of Power. Legend, £5.99. First in a vast fantasy trilogy in which four magical weapons hold the key to saving the world against the evil Miathan and armageddon. Aurian, the daughter of a renegade mage is sent to Nexis where she becomes embroiled in a battle with Miathan, escaping to the Southern Kingdoms where the first artefact of power is discovered.

Goldin, Stephen Trek to Madworld.

Titan, £4.50. The latest Star Trek sends Kirk and crew to Epsilon Delta 4 where argon poisoning is killing colonists. On the way the Enterprise is snatched by Enowil, an eccentric alien gnome who has also seized ships from a Klingon and Romulan ship. Enowil's problem is philosophical, the reward for solving it practical: the use of his unlimited powers. Should Kirk leave to save the colony and put the ultimate weapon in the hands of the enemies of the

Federation or play along and condemn the colonists to slow, painful death?

Hamilton, Laurell K. The Laughing Corpse. New English Library. Paperback original.

Harrison, Harry Galactic Dreams. Legend, £9.99 (tpb). Collection of 12 stories, some hilarious, like 'Space Rats of the CCC' - the Combat Camel Corps - and one new Bill the Galactic Hero tale. Previously announced as *Galactic Visions*.

Holt, Tom Faust Among Equals. Orbit, £14.99 (hc). Comedy-fantasy involving a management buyout of Hell, the escape of the Most Wanted Man in History, Lucky George Faustus. On his case is Kurt 'Mad Dog' Lundqvist, the foremost bounty-hunter of all time.

Holt, Tom Graiblazers. Orbit, £4.99. The quest for the Holy Grail has been long-forgotten by the Knights, who have taken up the new challenge of pizza delivery. Prince Boamund of Northgales is woken from his enchanted sleep in time to snatch back the Apron of Invincibility but is there time to figure out exactly what a Grail is?

James, Phil The Galaxy Game. Millenium, £4.99. Hilarious science fiction novel, first of a series. The hero, Richard Curtis is a disaster waiting to happen, Arnold a deaf computer based on Curtis' father, and their problem is to be unknowing players in an intergalactic game controlled by a Champion who is also a supreme god and his Challenger.

Jones, Gwyneth North Wind. Gollancz, £15.99 (hc). Follow-up to the James Tiptree Award winning White Queen. A hundred years have passed, the alien Aleutians have taken over the Earth, bringing their own legends with them. A young female believes she is the half-caste daughter of one legendary figure, a belief that puts her life in danger.

Llewellyn, Robert The Man in the Rubber Mask. Penguin, £4.99.

Llewellyn is, of course, better known as Kryten from *Red Dwarf*.

McDonald, Ian Necroville. Gollancz, £15.99 (hc). In a 21st century nanotechnology has revolutionised death; a third of the population live in Necroville, cities of the resurrected. On the Day of the Dead five young living people fulfill a pact and go down to the City of the Dead, Necroville; what they find will change them forever.

Marley, Stephen Judge Dredd: Dread Dominion. Virgin, £4.99. Picks up where one of the earliest Dredd tales leaves off, with Dredd's brother Rico being captured by Joe and sent to Titan. But in another dimension, Joe didn't take Rico in, and the consequences are terrible, a world where Judge Caligula is the Governor of New Rome and Anderson and Giant lead anti-Judge rebels.

Mosby, John X-Men: The Essential

Guide. Boxtree, £9.99 (sc).

Everybody's favourite mutants the X-Men are the stars in this oversized handbook which guides its readers through the history and talents of the team members, behind the technical aspects of Professor Xavier's mansion and looks at the yet-to-be-screened animation show.

Nazarro, Joe The Making of Red Dwarf. Penguin, £7.99. Behind the scenes of Series VI with American journalist Nazarro.

Pratchett, Terry Soul Music. Gollancz, £14.99 (hc). Pratchett's sixteenth Discworld novel introduces soul music to the turtle-borne world, and trouble for Susan, the granddaughter of Death, who has to take over the family business. The usual frenetic wise-cracking from Pratchett who has played these games before but never seems to tire of them. Thankfully for him, nor do we.

Richards, Justin Theatre of War.

Doctor Who, £4.99. Epic new adventure of interstellar warfare in which Bernice's archeological skills are of paramount importance.

Simmons, Dan Lovedeath. Headline, £5.99. Collection of five novellas by the multiple-award-winning sf and horror writer. Not all of them could be called sf or fantasy, the first story, for instance, is about a man's love for his daughter (yet it won the Locus Award as best sf novella of the year), and other stories include the story of the Battle of the Somme as seen through the eyes and experiences of a young poet. Highly recommended.

Stern, Roger The Death and Life of Superman. Bantam, £4.99. Excellent novelisation of the Death of Superman storyline working in the whole of the Death, the reign of the supermen and the return of the man himself. See feature and competition elsewhere on these pages for more.

Stine, R.L. Fear Street: The Sleep Walker. Archway, £2.99. Young adult horror series.

Watson, Ian The Coming of Vertumnus. Gollancz, £15.99 (hc). Superb collection of stories by one of the leading writers of short SF.

Webber, Collin Merlin and the Last Trump. Gollancz, £4.99. Fast, furious and humorous Arthurian fantasy, a finalist in the BBC Radio 4 Bookshelf/Gollancz Fantasy Novel Competition.

Weis, Margaret & Tracy Hickman Into the Labyrinth. Bantam, £14.99 (hc). The sixth title in the Death Gate Cycle. Xar, Lord of the Nexus, learns that by entering the Seventh Gate he may gain the power to create and destroy worlds, but first he must learn where the Seventh Gate is.

Westmore, Michael & Joe Nazarro Star Trek: the Next Generation... Make-up FX Journal.

Titan, £5.99 (sc). Co-written by Westmore, who is an accomplished make-up artist in the USA with work on several films (including Mask for which he won an Oscar), this reveals some of the shows special effects and make-up effects. There's commentary by Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner and Michael Dorn from the show, and step-by-step photographs which will have Trekkies...er, Trekkers creaming themselves.

Zelazny, Roger A Night in the Lonesome October. Orbit, £4.99. Charming fantasy, a departure from Zelazny's usual remit. Snuff is a watchdog who keeps watch over his master now that he's been cursed and has to do much of his work at night to keep worse things from happening. Illustrated by Gahan Wilson.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Death: The High Cost of Living.

Titan, £7.99. Gathering together the multiple-award-winning mini-series by Neil Gaiman, Chris Bachalo & Mark Buckingham. Introduction by Tori Amos. *Tori Amos?*

Neon Lit: City of Glass. Crown, £8.99. Adapted from the 1985 novel by Paul Auster, this is the first of a series of noirish thrillers by Paul Karasik & David Mazzucchelli.



FILMS

News: Well, everyone else is doing the old summer review thang, so here's a few related releases for the future: if you manage to avoid the westerns that are hitting the cinema faster than a Clint can draw his six-shooter there's **The Crow** released on June 10 with Brandon Lee proving that death is no obstacle to making a movie. The script is by splatter-punk horror writers David Schow & John Shirley and it's like dead creepy man, because Lee plays this dude who comes back from the dead, right? **RoboCop 3** should be released, finally, on June 24. It has a Frank Miller script and it's not too bad,

although there's nothing really new about the film. There's plenty of action and the ever-present corporate corruption of the Omni Corporation, this time taken over by the Japanese so that a few high kicks can be thrown in. **The Flintstones** could be this summer's flop. I dunno - it's just a naff idea bringing Fred and Barney to life in the shape of John Goodman & Rick Moranis. It's released on July 22 and the promotional circus has been around for a year, but... I think I'd rather go and see **Maverick** which actually looks like it'll be a lot of fun...Almost certainly the hit of the summer is going to be **True Lies** with Arnie, Jamie Lee Curtis and Art Malik, released on August 19. Arnie plays nuclear-terrorist task-force agent Harry Tasker, Curtis his unsuspecting and unhappy wife who finds solace in

an affair. But this is a \$100m+ James Cameron movie, so expect a few classy touches...and **Wolf** with Jack Nicholson is out August 26 which has Jack bitten by a wolf cub and suffering the usual symptoms but putting his howling at the moon routine to good use. Offering two aspirins is Michelle Pfeiffer as an animal doctor...and **The Mask** has crazy *Ace Ventura* star Jim Carrey, slated for release in the autumn...

By the time you read this they should have begun shooting **Die Hard 3** in New York (for release on December 30). Bruce get \$15m for his retake on John McClane, but when the first two netted \$81.4m and \$115.4m that's peanuts...and peanuts compared to the \$22 Kevin Costner is expected to net from **Water World** as producer and star; the budget for the

film is set at over \$110m making it the most expensive movie of all time...Meanwhile, Timothy Dalton has decided not to play James Bond for a third time (shame, shame) although shooting is still due to begin this autumn in St. Petersburg, Russia, and in the Caribbean and London. Dalton instead is due to play Rhett Butler in the sequel to **Gone With the Wind - Scarlett**. His last outing as Bond was a relative flop, grossing only \$35m, the lowest figure for the whole Bond series...and while we're on the subject of panic over payback, Jerry Zucker's **King Arthur** movie hit a snag when costs were set at \$60m, and the studio (Columbia) decided they needed a bigger star; out goes William Baldwin, in comes Sean Connery and Richard Gere...and Robert Redford's demands for a cut



The Man who TWICE!

You know the story: Kraang! A fist hits the side of the cage. Unrelentingly...

unstoppable...unbelievably...Doomsday is coming! With artist Jackson Guice & Denis Rodier, Roger Stern was the pen behind *Action Comics* during the biggest comic event this century, a world-wide spanning media event which shook the planet. If Richard Nixon got more column inches it was only because Tricky Dicky was a super-villain of such major proportions. But I still believe more of the world's 4 billion population knew and cared about the Death of Superman...

The story threaded through the Superman saga's four titles, the end coming in November of 1992 when *The Adventures of Superman* began a countdown, cutting the frame-count down through the issue until it closed on four frames per page. The final three issues played with the same trick until *Superman* #75 was told in full-page jolts and Dan Jurgens wrote the final words spoken by the Man of Steel - "Doomsday...is he...is he...". His head falls back into Lois' arms and the world sheds a tear.

These are comic book tricks, the sort that cannot translate into prose, but that was the task set to Roger Stern. At the age of 42, with seventeen years of experience in the comics industry as an editor and writer, he tackled *The Death and Life of Superman* (Bantam, 1993) head on, taking elements of 50 comics and

in the film's profits have meant that Fox are now having second thoughts about making **Crisis In the Hot Zone**, Ridley Scott's killer virus movie...*Tank Girl* begins filming this month with Emily Lloyd before the camera helmed by *Freddy's Dead* director Rachel Talaly, working from a script by Teddy Sarafian. Rumour has it that it's nothing like the Hewlett & Martin TG...Robin Williams looks unlikely to appear in **Batman 3** after all, but you can catch him in **Being Human** (released this autumn) as five different characters from different time periods...but after a fruitless search to find an unknown to fill the tights of Robin, producers seem to be favouring ex-Musketeer, Chris O'Donnell...Johnny Depp could be in the running for James Cameron's **Spider-Man** movie, or at least that's

killed Superman

weaving them into a best-seller.

It's not the first time a comic strip has been novelised. Elliot S. Maggin slaughtered *Superman: Last Son of Krypton* in 1978, at around the same time as Ron Goulart took Captain America, The Hulk, Vampirella and various other comic characters into American bookshops (often as Joseph Silva). Back in the sixties, Winston Lyon penned some Batman books to tie-in to the tv series and even novelised the Batman movie, but Stern's novel was the first to transfer a story so directly from comic book to prose page. It may seem easy - after all the plot, the dialogue and the action are all there for Stern to work from - but don't take anything away from the author: looks can deceive.

"In this case I was adapting a story that was spread over about 40 issues worth of 4 titles, plus bits and pieces from other issues," Stern told me. "And to make it more complicated there were several elements in the comic that you would expect someone who follows the comics to understand. When I tackled the opening section I had to explain what the Justice League was because I can't expect readers of the novel to know everything automatically."

"As I told my wife, doing a novel from scratch, rather than adapting something, I would probably have only put in one other fantastic element besides Superman as opposed to the forty or fifty fantastic elements that are in the story."

Stern was a veteran of the Superman saga of six-and-a-half years, having started at Marvel in December '75 as an assistant editor. Turning full-time in '78 or '79, his CV includes stints writing *Spider-Man*, *Incredible Hulk*, the *Avengers*, *Doctor Strange*, *Captain America*, the

Fantastic Four, the previous incarnation of Ghost Rider and the *Guardians of the Galaxy* for Marvel. Over at DC he has written *Starman*, *Power of the Atom* and *Superman* in various titles; for Valiant he briefly wrote *Magnus*, *Robot Fighter*.

The *Death of Superman* was followed inevitably by the mourning for a lost hero, the funeral, the rise of four pretenders to the crown, the return...all sorts of wildly improbable events that Stern had to treat seriously in the novel. "I came out with a greater appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of both prose and comics. There are things in comics that are far easier than in cold type; if I want a fantastic explosion to occur I only have to tell the artist, 'draw a fantastic explosion' whereas in a novel I would have to spend paragraph upon paragraph describing it."

"On the other hand, in a novel you can have these long conversations that go on for page after page that would just die in a comic."

Stern's association with the regular Superman family of titles came to an end with *Action #700*, but that's not the last time you'll find Stern linked with the name of Clark Kent. "After *Action #700* I needed some time off because for the last two-years it had been non-stop Superman projects, and even during the hiatus I wrote 90% of what became *Newtime* and *Supergirl*. But I do have a few Superman projects planned. There's an Elseworlds book with Superman set in the time of the Civil War - although the War will be much shorter with Superman involved. And there's another story I want to do which is Superman's first encounter with the supernatural involving him with Dr. Occult, another Siegel & Schuster

Comic World has got hold of copies of Roger Stern's novel *The Death and Life of Superman* thanks to the generosity of Bantam Books and to win one all you have to do is answer this simple question: Who is the love of Clark Kent's life and co-star of the hit tv series? Answers on a postcard to Castle House, 97 High Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 1TH. Usual competition rules apply.

character."

Occult pre-dated Superman by a couple of years, didn't he? "Yeh. He was around in '35 or '36 (*October 1935* for *New Fun Comics #6* - Steve). In many ways he was a trial run for Superman - in some stories he was in a trench coat, a sort of supernatural *Dick Tracy* or *Sam Spade*, and in other stories he acquired a costume."

Stern is also working on some creator-owned characters and has plans for a

few mini-series and one-shots before getting back into the regular monthly grind. And there's always the option of doing another book."

Bantam are interested in a second Superman novel which will be original. I have a title and a first line; once I figure out what the climax is, I'll write it up..."

That and the other 79,950 words. But that's the strength of a good writer: they can make it look and sound easy.

Neil Cooper





who Jim wants...Peter (*Incredible Hulk*) David's **Oblivion** movie is being test-marketed in Las Vegas and Colorado Springs to see if it's worth a theatrical release. Starring George (*Sulu*) Taki and Julie (*Catwoman*) Newmar, it's a science fiction western, and has already won the Gold Award at the Worldfest Houston International Film Festival, and **Oblivion II** is already on the cards, depending on how the tests go...Paramount have bought the film and tv rights to Mike Baroh & Jeff Butler's **The Badger**...Sam Raimi's **Darkman 2** will be released by Universal straight to video in November, with Arnold Vosloo as Darkman, and a third film **Darkman: The Return of Durant** will feature Larry Drake as the villain from a script by Mark Verheiden...**Welcome to the Terradome** is an sf yarn set in a polluted future under gang-land rules for release in the summer...

The new video laws which aren't technically due to take effect until September have already knackered: **Beyond Bedlam** was passed uncut and given an interim 18 certificate which has now been withdrawn while the BBFC reconsider their position on the sex and violence in the film. In an industry where the video release often saves a studio from massive losses on a film, this is worrying news to the film's producer Paul Brooks who remortgaged his house to help finance the movie. The film is on general release in the cinema and my only objection was Brooks' comment in a recent interview in *Premier* where he said "It's comic book violence and shouldn't be taken seriously". Just

what we don't need, violence and comics mentioned in the same breath as the implication that it's a problem that shouldn't be taken seriously. Seriously, yes. To extremes, no.

ANIMATION

Saturday mornings on ABC in the States are about to be livened up with Limelight Production's **Reboot** whose hero, Bob, accidentally ends up in the mainframe of his PC where he battles the evil MegaByte and cronies Hack, Slash and Hexadecimal and save the citizens of Mainframe from being deleted. Executive producers are Steve Barron & Richard Karo, and designs were by our very own Brendan McCarthy.

Fox Network have signed on **The Tick** for a 13-episode first season with Mickey Dolenz (ex-Monkees) as Tick's sidekick Albert.

On the movie front, Akira Kurosawa is to produce an animated version of the Moebius comic strip **The Airtight Garage**.

ANIME

News: Guy: Awakening of the Devil (reviewed last issue) is released by Animanica on June 27.

Urusei Yatsura: TV Series Vol.2 (Anime Projects 94005, 15). This is Anime Projects largest project to date, releasing the tv adaptation of Rumiko Takahashi's Lum series in 49 volumes

over an 8-year period. Subtitled it may be, but that shouldn't stop you enjoying the hilarious and off-the-wall adventures of Moroboshi Ataru, the lecherous teenager with his very own alien princess. The madness of these eight short stories escalates as more characters are introduced and the situations becomes more ludicrous; you can't help but laugh. 100m.

VIDEO

The first two volumes of **Quantum Leap** will be available from June 27, having been inexplicably delayed by a couple of months. More will follow at monthly intervals.

AUDIO

The final part of Douglas Adams' trilogy in five parts is released on tape in May. **Mostly Harmless** is read by the author and runs to 5 1/2 hours over 4 tapes, priced £14.99.

TRADING CARDS

Comic Images have announced **Forbidden Universe: Royo 2 Collector Cards** for July featuring the art of Spanish fantasy artist Luis Royo. Probably best known for his covers on Heavy Metal, Royo has also produced covers for books, albums and magazines. This is a follow-up to last year's **From Fantasy to Reality** set. Also in July, Comic Images release **The Alien World of Wayne Barlowe** set; Barlowe is a leading science fiction artist whose work has appeared in *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek* as well as the books *Barlowe's Guide to Extraterrestrials* and the forthcoming *Barlowe's Guide to Fantasy*.

Meanwhile, you should be able to pick up the Skybox series of **Star Trek New Generation, Episode Collection, Season One** cards. The 108 cards document each of the 26 episodes, the first of seven sets that will cover the whole run. Another tv related set is the **seaQuest DSV** series of 100 cards, 70 of them dealing with and taken directly from the first season's two-hour pilot and episodes.

MAGAZINES

The Comic Journal #27 (Spr 1994). Subs: £8 for 2 issues. The only magazine published in the UK dedicated to British comics contains lengthy tributes to Fred Holmes and George Martin, a look at *The Silent Three* from *School Friend*, the Thomson funny paper *Hoot*, a history of Boardman comics, and a collection of reminiscences from the late Wally Robinson. Available from Bryon

Whitworth, 17 Hill Street, Colne, Lancs BB8 0DH. **Forest Comics Quarterly #3** (Spr 1994). 50p. The latest A5 issue has an interview with Mark Buckingham, a profile and checklist of the work of John Byrne and introduces a new comic strip in the shape of 'The Free Earth Warriors'. Subs. are available for £2.00 for 4 (quarterly) issues, cheques made payable to G.J. Porter at Forest Comics, 11 Oakley Way, Bream, Lydney, Glos. GL15 6HQ. The first two issues are still available.

EVENTS

19 Jun **London**. Camden Centre, Bidborough Street. Card Mart.
25 Jun **Cardiff**. Central Hotel, St. Mary's Street. Comic Mart.
25 Jun **Leeds**. Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way. Comic Mart.
26 Jun **Liverpool**. Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street. Comic Mart.
2 Jul **Sheffield**. Main Hall, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street. Comic Mart & Film Fair.
3 Jul **Birmingham**. Acoc's Green. Collectors World Comic & Sci-Fi Fair.
9 Jul **CAPTION '94 The Oxford Alternative Comics Convention**. Oxford Union Society, St. Michael's Street. Special Guests: Hunt Emerson, Carol Swain, Pete Loveday, Leanne Franson. Advance membership: £10, or L6 (unwaged), cheques payable to CAPTION. On the door: £12. Enquiries to CAPTION '94, 25 Hart Street, Oxford OX2 6BN.
9 Jul **London**. Central Hall, Westminster. Comic Mart.
9 Jul **Birmingham**. Carrs Lane Church Centre. Comic Mart & Film Fair.
16 Jul **Newcastle**. Students' Union Ballroom, University of Northumbria, Sandyford Road. Comic Mart.
23 Jul **Manchester**. Parkers Hotel, Corporation Street. Comic Mart.
24 Jul **London**. Camden Centre, Bidborough Street. Comic Mart.
30 Jul **Gloucester**. Leisure Centre, Bruton Way. Comic Mart.
30 Jul **Leeds**. Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way. Comic Mart.
31 Jul **Basildon**. Basildon Sports Centre. Collectors World Comic & Sci-Fi Fair.
29 Aug **Brighton**. Brighton Centre. Comic Mart.
1-2 Oct **OCTOCOON '94 Fifth National Irish Science Fiction Convention**. The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Special Guest: Robert Holdstock; Special Comics Guest: Paul Peart. Other guests include Storm Constantine, Robert Rankin, James White, etc.
Registration until 1st Sept: £16.00 (attending, £10.00 supporting) adult, £12.00 (£10.00) junior. Cheque/postal order to Octocoon, 20 Newgrove Avenue, Sandymount, Dublin 4.

Multi Media was compiled by Neil Cooper, Steve Holland, Dave McLoughlin and Pete Taylor over coffee and tea cakes during the Bank Holiday weekend.

THE COMICS WAREHOUSE

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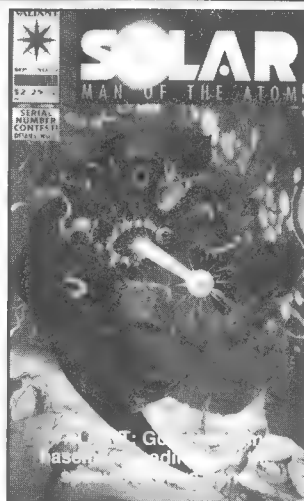
The pleasant Corinne has decided to visit pastures new and leave the Advertisement Managership of Comic World, (pause for a tear), ahhh sigh... but now we have: lights, orchestra, tumblers, highwire act, everyone to their places please, quiet in the wings, EVERYBODY QUIET, single spot, drum roll "and now we present" the delicious, diligent, detectible, delphic and determined, EMMA, as she steps into the frame and takes over at Comic World.

Can editor Steve take the pace with all these eligible women pounding the pages of his magazine: watch this space for gossip!!

Seriously, welcome to the hot seat EMMA, deadlines rush up on you like demented superheroes on speed, and people like me squeeze out very second we can to make the advertisement as up-to-date as we can. When I editorialised in this space last month, I did not realise that Steve Holland would lead on the censorship question (serendipity or what). Several customers have written to commend my words (thank you) and may even take the debate further with Steve in the editorial pages. My contention is still the same "be very careful out there", because there are prudes, moralists, and judgementalists around. These are the people who never examine, question, reflect or debate, they operate within a brainless knee jerk reaction, if its in a tabloid, it must be true, and it should be banned. Doncha just love the censor (of any variety) "I can read it, I can watch it, I can experience it, and it won't corrupt me, but I'm not going to let you anywhere near it, because in my opinion it will corrupt you." Is the Big Nanny state coming, make sure your diapers are clean.... Enjoy yourself, read lots of interesting books and enjoy yourself, some more. We've got well over half a million interesting books, from the Legionnaires and Valor who lead into this summer's Zero Hour, to Vertigo to the Ultraverse (its hard to decide on which is best Firearm or Nightman, they are both great and getting better). Dark Horse always produce interesting titles and have you caught The Flash lately, or read The Golden Age?

All of our advertisements are completely self-contained and cannot be mixed or matched with any other advertisement or offer. The prices in this ad are valid from the publication of Comic World until August 30th only. All prices are per copy except "set" or "pack" prices which are for single sets as advertised. Please remember that when ordering "mature" titles such as "vertigo" we must have your honest signed statement that you are in excess of sixteen years. Thank you for reading this far, the Warehouse aisles are open for your eyes and mind to wander through, welcome to the stupendous shelves of superheroes and replete racks of recreational reading (did I really say that....)

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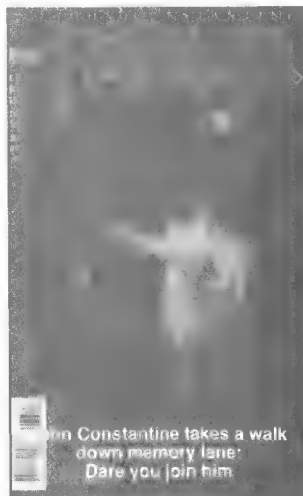
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M.	Mint Perfect
N.M.	Nearly Mint
V.F./V.F.N.	Very Fine
F.N.	Fine
V.G.	Very Good
G.	Good
F.	Fair
P.	Poor
B.S.	Bookshop Stamp on Cover
T.S.	Taped Spine
R.S.	Rolled Spine
M.C.	Marked Cover
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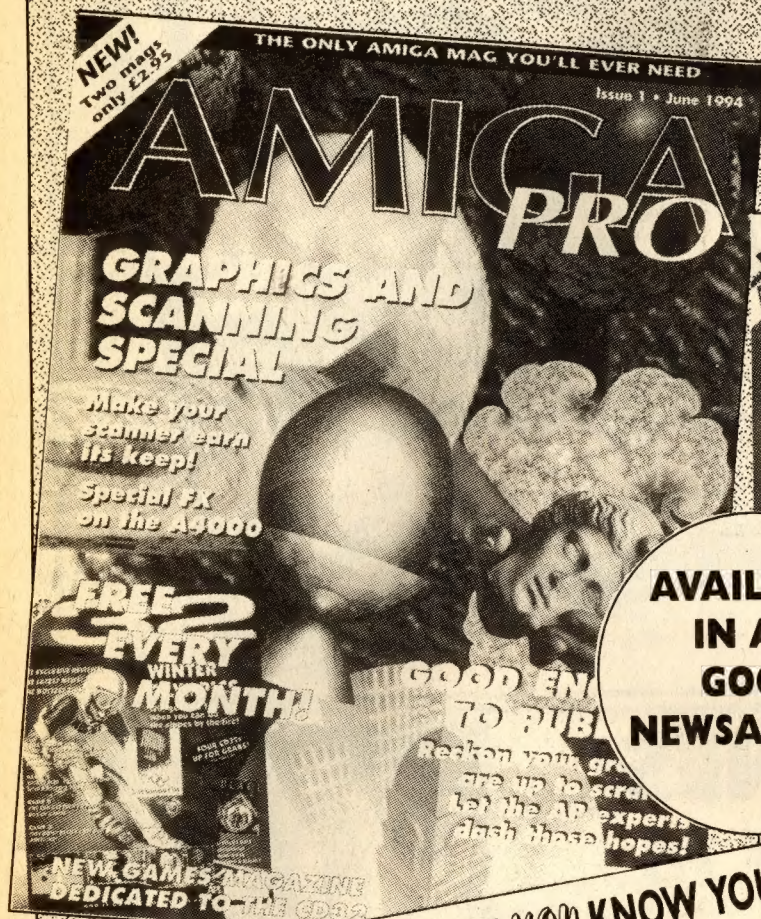
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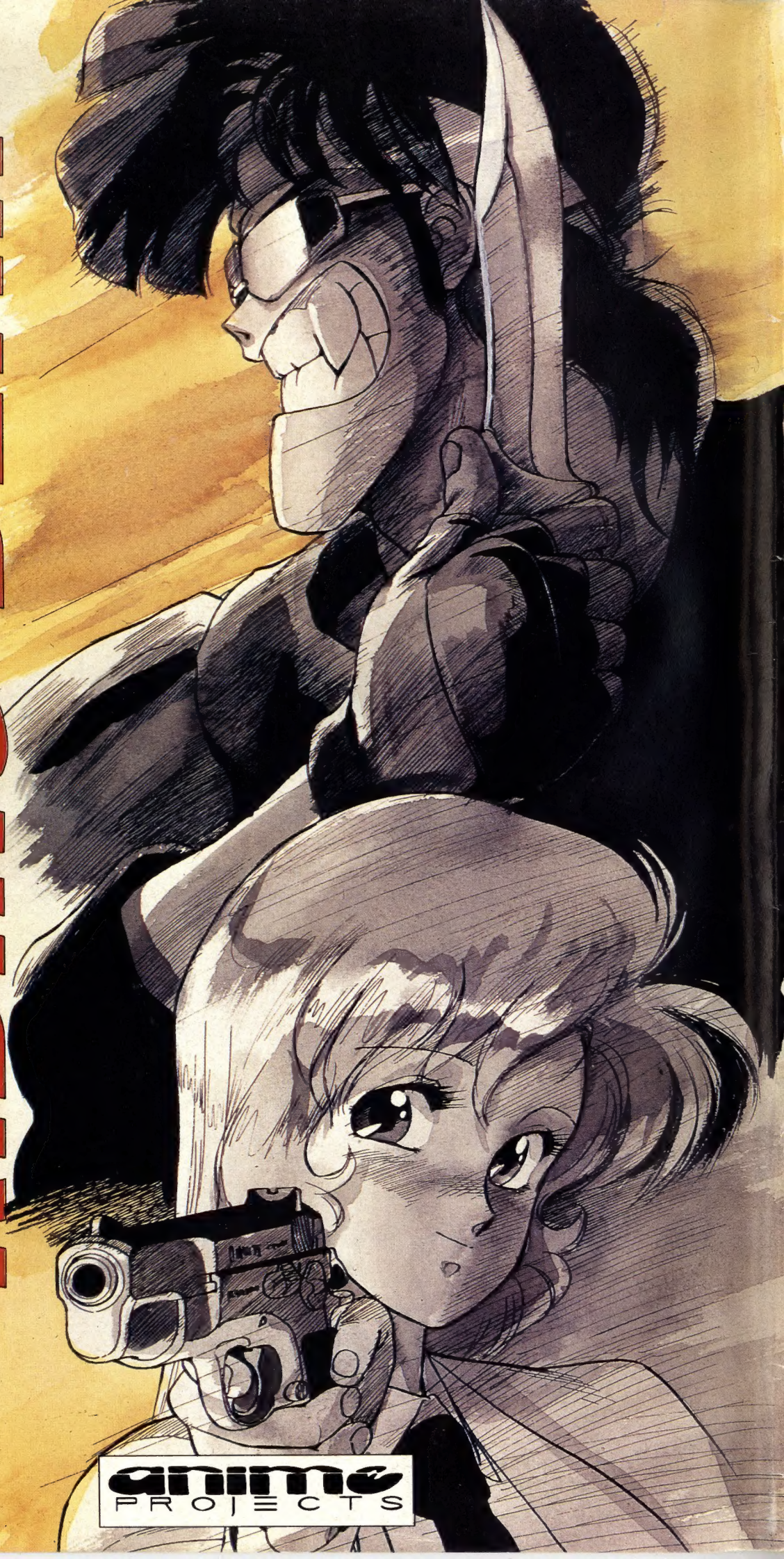
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